

Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act, we have taken a long-overdue step to strengthen our relationship with Peru, a close friend and important ally in Latin America. This agreement will result in new economic opportunities for U.S. farmers, manufacturers, and service providers, and I am pleased that the Senate has finally voted in favor of its implementation.

None of this would have been possible without the leadership of two of our United States Trade Representatives, Susan Schwab and her predecessor, Rob Portman. I want to thank Ambassador Portman for his hard work at the negotiating table that resulted in a solid agreement that will level the playing field for U.S. producers and exporters. And, I want to thank Ambassador Schwab for her dedication and perseverance that culminated in the May 10 bipartisan trade compromise, which set the stage for today's successful vote. Also meriting special mention for their tireless efforts are the Assistant United States Trade Representative for the Americas, Everett Eissenstat, and his predecessor, Regina Vargo.

Here in the Senate, I want to begin by thanking the chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator MAX BAUCUS. He is a true leader on trade and on the committee. And he is supported by a strong staff. That starts with the Democratic staff director on the Finance Committee, Russ Sullivan, and the deputy staff director, Bill Dauster, who were critical to the process. I also want to thank his chief international trade counsel, Demetrios Marantis, as well as the other members of the Democratic trade staff, Amber Cottle, Janis Lazda, Chelsea Thomas, Darci Vetter, and Hun Quach, and two individuals serving on detail to Senator BAUCUS, Russ Ugone and Ayesha Khanna.

Of course, I am grateful for the outstanding effort of my staff as well. First, my chief counsel and staff director, Kolan Davis, merits special mention. His legislative expertise has been instrumental in moving countless bills and this is no exception. I also want to thank my chief international trade counsel, Stephen Schaefer, as well as David Johanson, David Ross, and Claudia Bridgeford Poteet. And, I want to thank John Kalitka, who is on detail to my office from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Finally, I want to thank Polly Craighill and Margaret Roth-Warren of the Office of the Senate Legislative Counsel for their hard work on this legislation. As always, Polly's patience and expertise have been invaluable in producing a top-notch bill. Margaret is a relatively recent addition to the office and already she is proving herself a very strong asset to our legislative team.

Today's vote is long overdue. The May 10 compromise was expected to pave the way for quick consideration of all four of our pending free trade agreements, as well as the renewal of trade

promotion authority. That hasn't happened as quickly as I would have liked. Still, today's vote is a critical first step, and I hope we can use this vote to build momentum toward implementing the next agreement in line, which is our trade agreement with Colombia. We should move the Colombia trade agreement as soon as possible, and I will work hard toward that outcome in the 110th Congress.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today the Senate voted to approve H.R. 3688, the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act. In July of 2006, I opposed this agreement when it came before the Senate Finance Committee because it lacked enforceable labor standards—standards that Peru's President Alejandro Toledo indicated a willingness to support. What a difference a year makes. As a result of a landmark bipartisan agreement reached in May of this year, and for the first time ever in a free trade agreement, our agreement with Peru encompasses meaningful and enforceable labor and environmental protections.

The labor chapter of the agreement requires both the United States and Peru to adopt and maintain domestic laws to implement the five core standards incorporated in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: (1) the right to organize; (2) the right to bargain collectively; (3) prohibitions on forced labor; (4) protections for child labor; and (5) freedom from employment discrimination. The environmental chapter requires both the United States and Peru to adopt and maintain domestic laws to implement the obligations in seven multilateral environmental agreements to which both the United States and Peru are parties. I have long championed the inclusion of enforceable labor and environmental standards in free trade agreements, and I supported the agreement today because of these chapters. It is imperative that our trading partners be held to high labor and environmental standards, and I would not stand in support of this agreement had these provisions not been included.

The Peru Free Trade Agreement is a landmark achievement that makes these provisions fully enforceable—subjecting these provisions to the same dispute resolution system that applies to the commercial provisions of the agreement. I urge the President, along with the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, to hold Peru's government accountable to these provisions. By ensuring that these standards are fully enforced, the President can solidify this agreement with Peru as a model for dealing with future trading partners.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morn-

ing business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

LIHEAP

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, winter is fast approaching. The Senator from Minnesota was out there with his snow blower and shovel already this weekend. We had from 6 to 10 inches of snow in some portions of the State, 6 inches in the metro area. It was minus 2 when I woke up one day in the Twin Cities, in St. Paul. I traveled around the State. I think it was around minus 8, minus 9, and that is not getting cold yet. In that weather, we actually button the top button but no more.

The reality for many families is cold weather has a lot of people deeply concerned about their ability to keep the heat on. Most of us look forward to the coming of the holiday season as a time we get together with loved ones. For many Americans, this holiday season comes at a time when the cost of energy is skyrocketing. It is raising the level of anxiety as to whether they are going to be able to pay these ever-rising heating costs.

I will never forget a hearing I held for the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. I actually did a hearing on the issue of energy costs in my home State last year. I got a chance to listen firsthand to folks who, last year, were impacted by rising energy costs. They bear down on young and old alike.

I had the opportunity to meet Deidre Jackson, a single mother, working professional, and college student who saw her heating bill go through the roof. Meanwhile, Lucille Olson told a story familiar to many seniors of the struggle balancing the high cost of health care, prescription drugs, with heating bills that represented 30 percent of her monthly income. Unfortunately, for many seniors, this is not a balancing act that is easily maintained. Stories abound of grandmothers and grandfathers having to choose between food, medicine, clothing, and heat. This should not happen in America in the 21st century.

It is for stories such as these that we have the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—LIHEAP—to provide heating and cooling assistance for folks who are struggling to get by. To many Americans, LIHEAP is a real lifeline. More than 70 percent of families receiving LIHEAP assistance have

incomes of less than 100 percent of the Federal poverty level. That is about \$21,500 for a family of four. These are truly families who cannot afford to see their heating bills double. In fact, the majority of households have at least one member who is elderly, disabled, or a child under 5 years of age. These are the most vulnerable.

Unfortunately, current Federal funding levels are only sufficient to meet the needs of about 16 percent of the eligible households. Many States are trying to meet the needs of more households by providing smaller benefits to each household. Meanwhile, rising energy prices are rapidly reducing the purchasing power of program grants. This is a bad combination. In other words, folks in need are receiving less assistance while the cost of heating increases. Again, this is simply an untenable situation.

Consider that home heating prices are projected to reach almost \$1,000 a year for a typical family, representing an increase of almost 80 percent from the average cost during the winter of 2001–2002. It is in just 5 years that we have seen this incredible 80-percent increase in cost. In fact, data show we are looking at heating costs rising 15.2 percent this year and record levels for heating oil, propane, and electricity. Experts predict that Minnesotans who use heating oil will probably see an increase in their bill of 47 percent higher than last year's level. Meanwhile, the cost of natural gas, which most Minnesotans rely on for their heating needs, is up 38 percent from the average cost during the winters of 2000 to 2005.

The heating oil crisis we are facing this year is certainly partially due to America's need to import more and more oil. I have always said there is a national security need to end our dependence on foreign oil. There is also a very focused need in terms of the impact it has on those who simply cannot afford to pay their heating bills. We need to end their dependence on foreign oil. At the same time, we have to make sure to take care of those families in need today.

We have the tools to produce clean and renewable energy here at home, and our heating crisis is only one of the many reasons we need to finish work on the bold energy package the Senate passed this summer and the strong farm bill we have before us now. Those are two important pieces of legislation. I hope we can overcome this partisan divide in Washington that kind of tears us apart and precludes us from getting things done.

I have sat with the Presiding Officer. We talked about renewables and energy and seeing if we can find common ground. We need it in Maryland, we need it in Minnesota, we need it in America. Unfortunately, as much as we would like to transform our energy production before this winter begins, we don't have that option. But we can make sure Americans having a tough

time getting by have the assistance they need to make it through a cold season. For many, it really is a matter of survival. The large percentage of increases in heating costs don't really hit home until you look at a utility bill. A lot of folks will see hundreds of additional dollars on their heating bills this winter. That is a huge expense for a family below the poverty level or for the elderly on fixed incomes.

I drive by a bus stop on Grand Avenue in St. Paul, about four blocks from my house. There is a bus that stops there that takes you to downtown St. Paul. On a cold winter day, I look as I drive by. There may be a senior, a working mom—and it is cold. I look at the cost of energy and realize we have an obligation to try to do the right thing. That is what LIHEAP is about.

In life, sometimes the unexpected happens. No matter how much we try, sometimes we just need a helping hand to get back on our feet.

During my hearings back home, I heard a story from a courageous woman from St. Paul, Lori Cooper, who, as a working professional, wife, and mother of a 21-month child, had to figure out how to make ends meet when her husband's health prevented him from working. With heating costs rising, LIHEAP was critical in helping her family make it through the winter.

Tragically, it is getting harder for States to help families like this one get through winters like this because the appropriation levels have not risen with the inflation since the 1980s. The Labor-HHS-Education bill that the Senate has produced includes a welcome increase, but it is still below the real amount provided 20 years ago. If you look at where we were 20 years ago and factor in inflation, we are below that today. This would be much less problematic if we were not dealing with skyrocketing heating costs, which is why this winter, as in the winter of 2005–2006, families need emergency LIHEAP assistance.

In 2006, I came to the floor with Senators COLLINS and SNOWE to make the case to this body that no one should have to make the choice between basic necessities and heat. Rising to that challenge, we delivered an increase of \$1 billion additional LIHEAP funding in 2006. Today, I proudly stand with my colleague from Vermont who, along with 17 Members, introduced the Keep Americans Warm Act to meet the heating crisis we will face this winter. This bill provides \$1 billion in emergency LIHEAP assistance in addition to the funding currently included in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.

I urge my colleagues to join the 19 of us who are standing behind this bill, who are committed to meeting this urgent need. It took a lot of work to get emergency LIHEAP assistance passed in 2006. We worked very hard. It was difficult. I know it will take a lot of effort this time as well, but I am certain this Senate can come together to aid

those who are struggling to provide the bare necessity of heat. I have faith in the potential of this body to act for the greater good, and I look forward to working together to pass this important piece of legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAN

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, yesterday the Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Mike McConnell, released the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear weapons program. This NIE, which represents the best collective judgment of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, told us:

Our intelligence community has concluded with high confidence that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003.

This is a major reversal of the intelligence community's previous intelligence assessment in 2005 that Iran was determined to develop nuclear weapons. The NIE states that the nuclear weapons program was halted primarily in response to international pressure, which suggests that Iran may be more vulnerable to influence.

Perhaps most significant is the DNI's conclusion that some combination of threats of intensified scrutiny and pressures, along with opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals might prompt Tehran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program.

I commend Admiral McConnell and his colleagues for their decision to release unclassified conclusions based on this current intelligence. I do not believe we can overstate the importance of this new information.

The effects of this NIE will be felt here, at the United Nations, throughout Europe, across the entire Middle East, the world, and in Iran.

The NIE closely parallels many of the conclusions of the Internal Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, the international organization, with the most direct on-the-ground access to Iran's nuclear facilities. Once again, the facts appear to be bearing out the conclusions of the IAEA. This NIE, as well as the IAEA's analysis, should help inform and shape U.S. strategy on Iran.

President Bush has a responsibility to carefully consider the policy implications concerning Iran with this new information, and I know he will. He said in his news conference this morning that this new information which he has confidence in would be factored into our policy regarding Iran.

The United States must pursue a clear and strategic policy toward Iran