First, the measure we are passing renews import sanctions for 1 year and 1 year only. I emphasize this point because it has been misreported that this bill renews sanctions for 3 years. That is not accurate; the bill renews them only for 1.

Second, enactment of this bill does not overturn the easing of investment and financial sanctions that the administration unveiled earlier this year. In fact, this year's bill, as in years past, provides authority for the administration to waive the import sanctions should it determine that certain conditions have been met. Before deciding whether to waive import sanctions, I would strongly urge the administration not only to consider the changes occurring within Burma but also to consult closely with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy.

This year's legislation comes at a time of historic changes on the ground in Burma. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, long a political prisoner in the country, is now a member of Parliament. The National League for Democracy, once a banned organization, now actively participates in the political life of Burma.

For these reasons, the administration has taken a number of actions to acknowledge the impressive reforms that President Thein Sein and his government have instituted. The United States has responded by sending an ambassador to Burma for the first time in two decades. The administration also largely waived the investment ban and financial restrictions, permitting U.S. businesses to begin investing again in Burma.

For my part, I want to see investment in the ''new'' Burma. I want to see Burmese reformers empowered accordingly, and I want to see greater economic development come to this underdeveloped country. And, frankly, during challenging economic times here at home, I want American businesses to be able to compete in Burma now that sanctions have been removed by other Western governments.

That said, high standards for accountability in American business operations in Burma are important going forward. This seems particularly acute with regard to transactions involving Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise. I would urge U.S. businesses to show the Burmese people and the world the positive effects that American investment prompts. I am confident that, as they do elsewhere around the world, U.S. enterprises in Burma will set the standard for ethical and transparent business practices and lead the way for others to follow.

I would be remiss if I did not note the significant challenges in Burma that lie ahead. Ongoing violence in Kachin State and sectarian tensions in Arakan State reflect the long-term challenge of national reconciliation. Hundreds of political prisoners remain behind bars. The constitution still has a number of undemocratic elements. And the regime's relationship with North Korea, especially when it comes to arms sales with Pyongyang, remains an issue of grave concern.

Even with these challenges, however, I am greatly encouraged by the progress that has been made over the past year and a half in Burma. My colleagues and I in the Senate will continue to monitor developments in the country with great interest and with hope for the future.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY AMENDMENT ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, H.R. 5986 having been received from the House of Representatives, and its text being identical to the text of S. 3326, the Senate will proceed to the immediate consideration of the measure, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5986) to amend the African Growth and Opportunity Act to extend the third-country fabric program and to add South Sudan to the list of countries eligible for designation under that Act, to make technical corrections to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States relating to the textile and apparel rules of origin for the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement, to approve the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2008, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will read the bill for the third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the bill (H.R. 5986) is passed.

VETERANS JOBS CORPS ACT OF 2012—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I would suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SYRIA

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, at this late hour of our session, until September, I think it is important we continue to pay attention to and be concerned about the situation in Syria. Today, Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, announced the failure of his mission. If there is anything about the conflict in Syria that did not surprise most of us, it is the fact that Kofi Annan's mission was a failure. It was doomed to failure from the beginning. It was based on the premise that somehow Bashar Assad would be motivated to stop the massacre of his people. It was motivated on the premise that somehow U.N. observers could come in and stand between the two fighting forces but totally ignore the fundamentals of this conflict.

The fundamentals of this conflict are simple: It is the Syrian people attempting to assert their God-given rights and throw off the yoke of a brutal and unconscionable dictator, and on the other side of the equation Bashar Assad's commitment to doing whatever is necessary, including massacring now as many as 20,000 of his own people in his desperate quest to remain in power in Syria.

Let's not forget that one of the reasons we have seen heavy Russian involvement in the form of supplies of arms and equipment and continued Russian veto of resolutions in the U.N. Security Council that would have imposed even the mildest sanctions on Bashar Assad is what seems to be some kind of nostalgia on President Putin's part for the old Russian empire and the maintenance of their one base on the Mediterranean port in Syria.

The Russians' behavior in this throughout, as they continue to block one resolution after another, of course, is revealing of the true nature of the Putin regime, the autocracy and kleptocracy that has now asserted its full power and weight in Russia. In addition to that, of course, we have the Chinese joining Russia in their sustaining of vetoes in the U.N. Security Council.

It is hard to overstate the damage these actions by Russia and China have done to them, but it is also hard to overstate the damage that has been done to the Syrian people, with Russian equipment being supplied constantly, Iranian boots on the ground helping to set up torture centers, and continued encouragement of Bashar Assad to remain in power.

I am not here to again critique this administration's abysmal record, but isn't it ludicrous—isn't it ludicrous—to base your entire policy toward Syria on the belief that somehow the Russians would convince Bashar Assad that he should leave Syria? Isn't it foolish to somehow base your policy and nonintervention on the belief that somehow the mission of a former Secretary General of the United Nations would succeed when it was clear the Syrian people were not going to be satisfied with the continuous barbarous regime of Bashar Assad, and certainly Bashar Assad was not going to give up?

It is clear through Iran's actions that its rulers are playing for keeps in Syria, and they will stop at nothing to prevent the fall of Bashar Assad. Why are the Iranians so committed and involved? The words of General Mattis, the Commander of U.S. Central Command, described it before the Senate Armed Services Committee when he said that the fall of Bashar Assad would be ''the greatest blow to Iran in 25 years.''

So the United States does have more than a humanitarian interest in what