

jobs. It is well past time for a grownup conversation about tax policy. Our door remains open, and we look forward to having the President walk through it.

TAJIKISTAN WTO ACCESSION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss a matter of great importance in the trade arena.

Last week, the Senate approved legislation granting permanent normal trade relations to Russia and Moldova by a vote of 92 to 4. Such a strong vote would not have been possible without bipartisan cooperation from my Senate colleagues. I would once again like to express my appreciation to all the Republican members of the Finance Committee who worked with me and my staff in good faith to develop a strong enforcement package which addresses many of the concerns we all have with our bilateral trade relations with Russia.

I also want to again express my appreciation for the hard work and cooperation of Senator BAUCUS, the chairman of the Finance Committee. The process we undertook in the Finance Committee is emblematic of how the Finance Committee should work. It is my sincere hope this will be a model for future legislation.

Unfortunately, things don't always work so smoothly. In fact, I was quite disturbed to receive a letter earlier this week from Ambassador Kirk, our trade ambassador, informing me that the Obama administration intends to support approval of the proposed terms for Tajikistan's accession and the invitation for Tajikistan to become a member of the WTO at the upcoming WTO General Council meeting.

Let me be clear. I support efforts to help advance the rule of law by bringing countries such as Tajikistan into the World Trade Organization. What disturbs me is that the administration had been negotiating the WTO accession package for over 1 year and failed to even mention it to anyone on the Senate Finance Committee.

Even more troubling is the fact that the final WTO working party meeting took place on October 26, 2012, at which Tajikistan's proposed protocol of accession was completed. Yet no one in the Senate received any information about the accession until last week. Why the Obama administration waited 5 additional weeks after completing Tajikistan's WTO accession negotiations before notifying the committee is a mystery for me.

For an administration that touts its commitment to transparency and unprecedented consultations with Congress, their failure to consult with the Finance Committee and the Senate on the terms of Tajikistan's proposed accession protocol reveals that the administration's bold pronouncements about their excellent consultations are nothing more than empty rhetoric.

Moreover, section 122 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act requires the administration to consult with the Senate Committee on Finance before any vote is taken by the WTO relating to the accession of a new member. While sending a letter to the committee 1 mere week before a vote is taken in the WTO and after the terms of the accession are already completed might technically comply with the letter of the law, it in no way complies with the spirit of the law.

Had Congress been notified of Tajikistan's pending invitation to join the WTO earlier, it might have been possible to include provisions granting Tajikistan permanent normal trade relations along with the Russia and Moldova bills. But that was not possible. Instead, the Obama administration's lack of transparency and failure to meaningfully consult with Congress rendered that impossible.

As we continue to try to work with the Obama administration to develop policies and advance legislation which create economic growth and open new markets for U.S. workers and job creators, the administration must engage in meaningful consultations. Accordingly, I would expect the way the Tajikistan accession has been handled by the Obama administration will be an exception and not the norm regarding future consultations.

To help ensure that is the case, I will soon be sending a letter to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative with some detailed questions regarding their consultations with Congress and the private sector trade advisory committees. It is vitally important that we bring more transparency to this process, so I sincerely hope we receive a detailed and substantive response soon.

I also hope we can soon begin to have a meaningful discussion with the administration about their plans for renewing trade promotion authority.

As most of my colleagues know, trade promotion authority is an important tool which helps us pry open foreign markets to U.S. exports. Every President since FDR has sought trade promotion authority from Congress. Despite its critical importance, the administration keeps putting off any meaningful discussion of renewal. In fact, when Ambassador Kirk testified before the Finance Committee last March, I offered to sit down with him that day to start talking about TPA renewal. He declined my offer. Instead, he simply said he would be happy to sit down and talk with me and members of the Finance Committee about TPA renewal "at the appropriate time."

Since that time, there has been no administration dialog with me or with the Finance Committee about TPA, even though the Obama administration intends to conclude the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations by October of next year and is considering launching negotiations for a free-trade agreement with the European Union as early as next month.

Frankly, both of these initiatives are going to require TPA in order to be successful. While TPA should have been renewed long ago, we currently cannot wait any longer. If these trade initiatives are going to succeed we cannot continue to keep putting them off.

The time for the administration to start meaningful consultation with Congress on TPA renewal is now and I would like to see more cooperation. In this Congress we have seen the Korean Free Trade Agreement, we have seen the Colombian Free Trade Agreement, and we have seen the Panamanian Free Trade Agreement. We have seen the PNTR with Russia. Those would not have happened if we had not been pushing on the Finance Committee to get them done.

In my opinion, the administration has been slow-walking all of those. Those mean balance of trade positives for our companies here in America and I hate to see us playing around in deleterious ways with these types of agreements. I have suggested some other agreements here that need to be entered into. We need to get real on international trade. We need to be able to compete with anybody in this world, and we are able to if we are given the chance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

REDUCING REGULATORY BURDENS ACT OF 2011

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to discuss legislation we could actually pass. I am not talking about the fiscal cliff or sequester or anything quite so heavy, but nevertheless very important. It has bipartisan support, sort of, been passed out of the Senate Agriculture Committee, passed out of the House of Representatives by over 300 votes, but it has yet to be brought to the Senate floor for debate. That debate could be over within a half hour.

The majority leader talks about bipartisan support for legislation and hurdles to bring the bipartisan legislation to the floor. Obviously we have them. But I want to remind the Senate that this bill has already passed the House, as I have said, with broad bipartisan support and, again, with over 300 votes. That does not happen often in the House of Representatives these days. It passed out of the Senate Agriculture Committee with bipartisan support. It did not even have to have a hearing. Yet the majority leader has not allowed this bill to come to the floor for a vote. I urge him to do that.

I am talking about H.R. 872. What is that? That is the Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011. How could anybody be opposed to that? It has been pending before the Senate for 17 months. That is long enough. That is certainly long overdue. This bill was placed on the Senate Calendar on June 21 in 2011. We need to pass this bill. We