

his own people. These are literally garbage cans filled with munitions and explosives that explode, killing civilian populations. The photos showed children who had been maimed, lost their limbs, and some had been killed by these barrel bombs that continue. Now Assad has decided to up the ante. He is including chlorine gas in the barrel bombs as well.

These doctors try to save these children and save these victims. Many times they are operating on tables in abandoned schools. They are begging for medicines, which are at a high premium. Many times they are not successful. What will we do? What can the United States do?

I hope that we can be part of an effort—an international effort—to provide safe zones for medical treatment and for the displaced persons in Syria. I hope to join with others on a bipartisan basis in urging that alternative.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today the Senate will vote on whether to proceed to a bill that was reported out of the Senate Finance Committee, on which I serve, the trade promotion authority legislation. What is so remarkable about this is that we are on the cusp here in the Senate of passing a major piece of legislation—bipartisan legislation on which a Republican majority in the Senate is working with a Democratic President to give him trade promotion authority—something that would be very good for our economy. If the Democrats in the Senate do not blow it, this could be a major hallmark achievement of this Congress. But my understanding is there is an effort on the other side now to prevent us from even getting on the bill to debate it. I hope that as Democrats contemplate that move, they will think long and hard about what they will be doing. Not only will they be undermining their own President, who is very much for this, but they will be hurting the American economy. Almost every President, literally back to FDR, has had trade promotion authority in which he has the ability to negotiate trade agreements with our trading partners in a way that Congress ultimately has to approve but in a way that expedites and gives the maximum amount of leverage to get the best trade agreement possible.

We are taking up that legislation, hopefully, later today. But it is all going to depend on Senate Democrats and whether they want to proceed to this bill or not. I certainly hope, as I said, that they will come to the conclusion that it is in the best interests of our country, of our economy, and certainly, I think, in the best interests of creating a bipartisan achievement here in which they are working with their own President and with Republicans here in the Senate.

With 96 percent of the world's consumers outside the borders of the United States, trade is essential to growing our economy and opening new markets for products marked "Made in the USA."

Over the past few years, exports have been a bright spot in our economy, supporting an increasing number of American jobs each and every year. In fact, in 2014 exports supported 11.7 million U.S. jobs and made up 13 percent of our Nation's economy.

In my home State of South Dakota alone, exports support more than 15,000 jobs in industries that range from farming and ranching to machinery and electronics. We need to continue to open markets around the globe to American goods and services. The best way to do that is through new trade agreements. Countries with which we have free and fair trade agreements purchase substantially more from us than other countries.

In fact, in 2013, free-trade agreement countries purchased 12 times more goods and services per capita from the United States than non-free-trade agreement countries. Let me restate that. In 2013, those countries with which we have a free-trade agreement purchased 12 times more goods per capita from the United States than those countries with which we do not have a free-trade agreement.

It is not just American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers who benefit from trade agreements. American consumers benefit as well. Trade agreements give American families access to a greater variety of goods at lower prices.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that trade increases American families' purchasing power by \$10,000 annually. For American workers, increased trade means more opportunity and increased access to high-paying jobs. Manufacturing jobs tied to exports pay on average 13 to 18 percent more than wages in other areas of our economy.

Unfortunately, while trade agreements were proliferated around the globe over the past several years, the United States has not signed a new trade agreement in 5 years. Altogether, the United States has just 14 trade agreements currently in effect. That is a lot of lost opportunity for American workers and businesses, since trade agreements have proved to be the best way to increase demand for American products and services.

A big reason for the lack of trade agreements in recent years is the fact that trade promotion authority expired in 2007. As I said earlier, since 1934—you have to go back to the administration of FDR—almost all of the United States' free-trade agreements have been negotiated using trade promotion authority or a similar streamlined process. Trade promotion authority is designed to put the United States in the strongest possible position when it comes to negotiating trade agreements.

Under TPA, Congress sets guidelines for trade negotiations and outlines the priorities the administration has to follow. In return, Congress promises a simple up-or-down vote on the resulting trade agreement, instead of a long amendment process that could leave the final deal looking nothing like what was negotiated. That simple up-or-down vote is the key. It lets our negotiating partners know that Congress and trade negotiators are on the same page, which gives other countries the confidence they need to put their best offers on the table, and that in turn allows for a successful and timely conclusion to negotiations.

Currently, the administration is negotiating two major trade agreements that have the potential to vastly expand the market for American goods and services in the European Union and in the Pacific.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is being negotiated with a number of Asia-Pacific nations, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and Vietnam.

If this agreement is done right, there could be huge benefits for American agriculture, among other industries. Currently, American agricultural products face heavy tariffs in many Trans-Pacific Partnership countries. Poultry tariffs in TPP countries, for example, can reach a staggering 240 percent. Reducing the barriers to American agricultural products in these countries would have enormous benefits for American farmers and ranchers.

Agricultural producers in my State of South Dakota have contacted me to tell me how trade benefits their industries and to urge support for trade promotion authority as the most effective way to secure trade agreements that will benefit South Dakota farmers and ranchers.

The leader of the South Dakota Dairy Producers Association wrote to me about the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which could have significant benefits for South Dakota dairy farmers, and urged me to vote in favor of trade promotion authority. He said the Trans-Pacific Partnership talks "have the potential to be positive for our dairy industry, but only if the U.S. insists on settling for nothing less than a balanced deal that delivers net trade benefits for the dairy industry. Passing TPA is a key part of getting there." That is from a dairy producer in my State of South Dakota.

Mr. President, passing TPA is a key part of getting there. Neither the Trans-Pacific Partnership nor the United States-European Union trade agreement is likely to be completed in a timely fashion without trade promotion authority. If we want to make sure that trade negotiations achieve the goals of American farmers and manufacturers, trade promotion authority is essential.

The bipartisan bill we are considering on the Senate floor this week reauthorizes trade promotion authority,

and it includes a number of important updates, such as provisions to strengthen the transparency of the negotiating process and ensure that the American people stay informed.

It also contains provisions that I pushed for to require negotiators to ensure that trade agreements promote digital trade as well as trade in physical goods and services. Given the increasing importance of digitally enabled commerce in the 21st-century economy, it is essential that our trade agreements include new rules that keep digital trade free from unnecessary government interference.

This trade promotion authority bill will help ensure that any trade deals the United States enters into will be favorable to American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers, and it will hold other countries accountable for their unfair practices. Passing this bill is essential to prevent American workers and businesses from being left behind in the global economy.

Since Republicans took control of the Senate in January, Democrats and Republicans have come together on a number of issues to pass legislation to address challenges that are facing our country. I hope this bill will be our next bipartisan achievement.

The President has made it clear that he supports this bill, and key Democratic Senators are working to make sure it passes. I hope the rest of the Democratic Party here in the Senate will come together with the President and Republicans to get this done.

As President Obama said the other day, "We have to make sure that America writes the rules of the global economy. . . . Because if we don't write the rules for trade around the world—guess what—China will. And they'll write those rules in a way that gives Chinese workers and Chinese businesses the upper hand, and locks American-made goods out." Again, that is a quote from President Obama.

To put it another way, if America fails to lead on trade, other nations will step in to fill the void, and those nations will not have the best interests of American workers and American families in mind.

It is time to pass trade promotion authority so we can secure favorable new trade deals and ensure that American goods and services can compete on a level playing field around the globe and that American workers and American consumers receive the benefits that come along with that. I hope that will be the outcome of the vote today, and I hope it will be a major achievement for this Senate—a bipartisan achievement where both sides work together for the good of our economy, for the good of jobs, for the good of higher wage levels for American workers, and for the good of a more competitive economy in which our consumers benefit.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### TRADE

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, at 2:30 this afternoon, the Senate will vote on a motion to proceed to the fast-track bill which was recently approved by the Finance Committee. I will be strongly opposing that legislation.

In a nutshell, here is the reality of the American economy today: While we are certainly better off than we were 6½ years ago, the truth is that for the last 40 years the American middle class has been disappearing. The truth is that today we have some 45 million Americans living in poverty, and that is almost at the highest rate in the modern history of America.

While the middle class continues to shrink, we are seeing more income and wealth inequality than at any time in our country since 1929, and it is worse in America than any other major country on Earth. Today, 99 percent of all new income is going to the top 1 percent. Today, the top one-tenth of 1 percent owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. In the last 2 years, the 14 wealthiest people in this country have seen an increase in their wealth of \$157 billion, and that \$157 billion is more wealth than is owned by the bottom 130 million Americans.

How is that happening? Why is it happening? We have seen a huge increase in technology, productivity is way up, and the reality is that most working people should be seeing an increase in their income. Yet, median family income has gone down by almost \$5,000 since 1999. How does that happen? Why is it that the richest country in the history of the world has almost all of its new wealth in the hands of the few, while the vast majority of the American people are working longer hours for lower wages? How does that happen? Well, there are a lot of factors, but I will tell everyone that our disastrous trade agreements, such as NAFTA, CAFTA, and permanent normal trade relations with China, are certainly one of the major reasons why the middle class is in decline and why more and more income and wealth goes to a handful of people on the top.

The sad truth is that many of the new jobs created in this country today are part-time and low-paying jobs. Thirty or forty years ago, people who maybe had a high school degree could go out and get a job in a factory. They never got rich and it wasn't a glamorous job, but they had enough wages and benefits to make it into the middle class.

Since 2001, we have lost almost 60,000 factories in America. When young people graduate from high school today, they don't have the opportunity to work in a factory and have a union job and make middle-class wages; their options are Walmart and McDonald's, where there are low wages and minimal benefits. Those are companies which are vehemently anti-union.

The sad truth is that we are in a race to the bottom. Not only have our trade agreements cost us millions of decent-

paying jobs, they have depressed wages in this country because companies—virtually every major multinational corporation in this country has outsourced jobs and shed millions of American jobs. What they say to workers is: If you don't like the cuts in health care and wages, we will go to China. We can hire people there for \$1 an hour.

Sadly, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement follows in the footsteps of the other disastrous free-trade agreements that have forced American workers to compete against desperate and low-wage workers around the world.

Over and over again—and I have heard this so many times, including on the floor this morning—supporters of fast-track have told us that unfettered free trade will increase American jobs and wages and will be just wonderful for the American economy. Sadly, however, these folks have been proven wrong and wrong time after time after time. I hear the same language, and what they say proves not to be true every time.

I will mention some quotes from the supporters of NAFTA. These are people who were telling us how great the NAFTA free-trade agreement would be.

President Bill Clinton was pushing NAFTA in the same way that President Obama is pushing TPP today. On September 19, 1993, President Clinton said:

I believe NAFTA will create 200,000 American jobs in the first two years of its effect. . . . I believe that NAFTA will create a million jobs in the first five years of its impact.

It wasn't just liberals, such as Bill Clinton, who supported NAFTA. I have a quote from the very conservative Heritage Foundation in 1993: "Virtually all economists agree that NAFTA will produce a net increase of U.S. jobs over the next decade."

In 1993, the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, our majority leader MITCH MCCONNELL, said: "American firms will not move to Mexico just for lower wages."

Were President Clinton, the Heritage Foundation, and MITCH MCCONNELL correct? Well, of course they were not. In fact, what happened was exactly the opposite of what they said.

According to the well-respected economists at the Economic Policy Institute, NAFTA has led to the loss of more than 680,000 jobs. In 1993, the year before NAFTA was implemented, the United States had a trade surplus with Mexico of more than \$1.6 billion. Last year, the trade deficit with Mexico was \$53 billion. So all of the verbiage we heard about NAFTA being so good for American workers turned out to be dead wrong.

What about China? We were told: Oh my God, China will open up the Chinese market, and there are billions of people. What an opportunity to create good-paying jobs in America.

Here is what President Clinton, one of the proponents of permanent normal trade relations with China, had to say in 1999: