

That is why I have long been an advocate for closer economic ties between our countries. In fact, back in 2001, I introduced legislation to authorize fast-track consideration of a free-trade agreement with New Zealand.

The New Zealand Government has been actively pursuing a free-trade agreement with the United States for several years. Up until recently, they have been rebuffed by the Bush Administration for reasons having nothing to do with the potential economic merits of such an agreement.

I disagree with that approach. I believe that trade agreements should be pursued or not pursued primarily on the basis of their economic merit.

I thought it was time to allow the Government of New Zealand to make its case. And so I brought my trade delegation to New Zealand to meet with Government officials and business representatives, to explore market opportunities, and to build new relationships.

As in Australia, a highlight of the visit was my meeting with New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark. Prime Minister Clark and I discussed prospects for a bilateral free-trade agreement and also exchanged views on how the United States and New Zealand can cooperate on regional and multilateral trade issues.

I told the Prime Minister that I think a free-trade agreement between the United States and New Zealand makes sense—so long as it is the right agreement. And the Australia Free-Trade Agreement—with its strong protections for Montana agriculture—is the right model to follow.

Australia and New Zealand share a common market. For that reason, it would have made sense to include New Zealand in the United States-Australia Free-Trade Agreement in the first place.

The Administration settled for 80 percent of the Australia-New Zealand market, when it could have had 100 percent. But that is in the past, and Prime Minister Clark and I agreed that we need to look forward.

During my visit, I was also privileged to meet, along with members of my delegation, with New Zealand's Minister of Agriculture and Trade Negotiations Jim Sutton and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Phil Goff. I appreciate the useful and wide-ranging discussions that we shared.

In New Zealand, the trade delegation was able to visit several cutting-edge agricultural facilities, including a revolutionary robotic milking station, an advanced agricultural research station, and an agricultural technology incubator. Many of the Montanans who participated in the trip have gone home with new ideas that will help them both emulate and compete with their New Zealand counterparts.

My sincere thanks go out to our hosts, the Government of New Zealand,

for their great hospitality. I also thank the U.S. Embassy and Consulate staffs in Wellington and Auckland for all their hard work putting together a fantastic schedule for a whirlwind 2-day visit. I particularly want to thank U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand Charles Swindells for his advice and assistance.

Finally, I thank New Zealand Ambassador to the United States John Wood as well as Ian Hill and Janette Malcolm from the New Zealand Embassy in Washington for all their help in making the trip such a success.

After all the government meetings, tours of agricultural facilities, and discussions with business groups, I came away believing that the right free-trade agreement with New Zealand makes sense for the United States and makes sense for Montana.

Like Australia, New Zealand is a strong market for American manufactured goods and services. Like Australia, New Zealand can serve as a launching pad for reaching Asian markets. And New Zealand is a developed country with a strong legal system, which sets the stage for a high-standards agreement.

You may not guess this, but from Montana's standpoint, New Zealand is a more important market, relatively speaking, than it is for the United States as a whole. While New Zealand is the United States' 49th largest trading partner, it is one of Montana's top 25 export markets—not far behind Malaysia, and more important than Thailand or the Philippines.

That doesn't mean it would be easy. I know that negotiating a free-trade agreement with New Zealand would raise sensitive issues for Montana's farmers and ranchers, several of whom joined me on the trip. But I also know that facing difficult trade issues pays off in the end.

That is because—in the end—trade means jobs.

There are tremendous opportunities in the Australia and New Zealand markets awaiting those Americans intrepid enough to seek them out. Increased trade will generate jobs and good-paying ones at that.

I want Montana to participate in and benefit from an enhanced trading relationship with these countries.

Yet, in a more general sense, these enhanced relationships are about openness.

While historians like to talk about the past 100 years as the "American Century," Americans are anxious about the challenges facing our country. We wonder whether our children and grandchildren will enjoy the same standard of living we have known.

Faced with this uncertainty, some Americans look at the Pacific Rim and see danger. They see the rise of China's and Asia's economic prowess as a threat to American prosperity.

But we have never been a nation that succeeds only by the economic failure of others.

We used the Marshall Plan to help pull Europe out of economic distress—and have benefited enormously. We believed that capitalism would win the Cold War—and it did.

Now China, Vietnam, Russia, and others are beginning the transition to a free market economy. This is a positive development—not one to fear.

To me, the challenge is elementally about whether we will meet the future with open minds and open arms, or whether we will turn inward and seek shelter from the inevitable storms that change always brings.

America has never shied away from engagement with the rest of the world. We have been successful because we are confident, innovative, positive, and open. We can only lose our place in the world if we forget who we are and forget how we got here in the first place.

That is why I will continue to work for an open trade policy. It is why I will continue to fight hard for Montana's place in the world.

It is also why I think it is so important to take these trade missions abroad. In the past couple of years, I have led missions to Cuba, Japan, China, and Thailand. This time, we went to Australia and New Zealand.

Every trip has brought success. Each trip has opened doors for Montana business. And discovering the potential in any market or relationship ultimately is what makes trade work for Montana, as well as for the United States.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for its 40th year of service in protecting the environment of my great State. In 1964, citizens joined together to save Rookery Bay from over-development, and since that day the conservancy and its many supporters have worked to preserve the breathtaking natural habitat and the quality of life in southwest Florida.

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida has created so many wonderful institutions that all Floridians, young and old can enjoy. This includes the Conservancy Nature Center, which allows kids and adults alike to work hands-on to learn about the ecosystem and the varied wildlife that inhabits the area. Whether it is testing water quality, acquiring at-risk lands or rehabilitating nearly 2000 animals a year, the conservancy makes Florida a better place to live.

Throughout my years in public service, the conservancy has been an ally and a friend in the work of preserving Florida's natural resources. I hope that for the next 40 years and beyond, this wonderful organization will continue

to help Florida and its citizens enjoy the beauty the state has been blessed with.

CONFIRMATION OF SAMUEL BODMAN AS SECRETARY OF ENERGY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the Senate's confirmation of Dr. Samuel Bodman as our new Secretary of Energy.

I believe Dr. Bodman will bring considerable skill to the position of Secretary of Energy. Dr. Bodman's distinguished career speaks for itself. In the private sector, he excelled as a professor at MIT, president of an investment company, and chairman and CEO of a worldwide industrial company. In these positions, he gained a great deal of knowledge in financial markets and the impact energy and technology has on those markets. He further proved his capabilities in his service as Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. There is no question that Dr. Bodman is qualified to assume this important position.

As a Nation, we are far too dependent on foreign sources of energy and must work to increase our energy independence. While I support domestic oil production, I also believe that we must continue to develop alternative sources of energy in the United States. In my home State, Utah State University is working with the Department of Energy to that end. I was pleased that the Department of Energy recently awarded Utah State University a grant to further the university's studies into alternative energy research and development programs. Such programs are essential to ensure we can meet our Nation's future energy needs, and I admire the university for being at the forefront on this issue.

I have a great deal of respect for Dr. Bodman, and I look forward to working with him on the compelling energy issues facing our Nation. While there will certainly be challenges to overcome as we work to shape our energy policy and increase our energy independence, I am confident that Dr. Bodman will serve admirably in the position.

HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I am pleased to again be an original cosponsor of Senator COLLINS' Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act. This important legislation will coordinate and simplify the often complicated and confusing homeland security grant process. This bill will make it much easier for local first responders to get funding by reducing the many, and often redundant, grant applications steps. The amendment also gives local

officials far more flexibility in spending homeland security dollars, including paying for overtime costs associated with homeland security tasks and training. Successful programs, such as FIRE Act grants, the COPS program, and the Emergency Management Performance Grant program, are protected in this legislation.

The legislation also tackles the controversial topic of how to allocate funding. I believe it has struck a fair balance by both allocating funding based on threat, as recommended by the 9/11 Commission and others, and maintaining baseline funding so that States and local officials can have a predictable stream of funding to meet the homeland security needs faced by all jurisdictions. As Senator COLLINS noted, the support this bill has gotten from Senators from both large and small States is indicative of the balanced approach taken by this legislation.

The Senate adopted this measure by voice vote in the last Congress as an amendment to the intelligence reform bill and it is my hope that the Senate will soon take up and pass this important bill. Simplifying and rationalizing the current homeland security grant system should be a top priority. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and to adequately allocate resources to meet our homeland security needs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. WARNER, from the Committee on Armed Services, without amendment:

S. Res. 29. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. STEVENS, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. Res. 30. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. LUGAR, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment:

S. Res. 32. An original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee on Foreign Relations.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself, Mr. CORZINE, and Mr. LAUTENBERG):

S. 224. A bill to extend the period for COBRA coverage for victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. STEVENS (for himself, Mr. INOUE, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 225. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a program to reduce

the risks from and mitigate the effects of avalanches on recreational users of public land; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. DEWINE (for himself and Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 226. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to improve immunization rates by increasing the supply of vaccines; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI:

S. 227. A bill for the relief of Ernesto Guillen; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CRAPO:

S. 228. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish an Office of Men's Health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BINGAMAN (for himself and Mr. DOMENICI):

S. 229. A bill to clear title to certain real property in New Mexico associated with the Middle Rio Grande Project, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. 230. A bill to improve railroad safety; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 231. A bill to authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to participate in the rehabilitation of the Wallowa Lake Dam in Oregon, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SMITH:

S. 232. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, to assist in the implementation of fish passage and screening facilities at non-Federal water projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. ROBERTS:

S. 233. A bill to increase the supply of quality child care; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. DODD:

S. 234. A bill for the relief of Majan Jean; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ENSIGN (for himself and Mr. REID):

S. 235. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to sell certain parcels of Federal land in Carson City and Douglas County, Nevada; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 236. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to clarify the treatment of payment under the medicare program for clinical laboratory tests furnished by critical access hospitals; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LAUTENBERG:

S. 237. A bill to amend title 23, United States Code, to ensure that certain states remain eligible for Federal highway funds; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. HAGEL:

S. 238. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue code of 1986 to exclude from gross income interest received on loans secured by agricultural real property; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. SNOWE (for herself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. FEINGOLD):