

military experience, has a significant background of being the CEO of Procter & Gamble, and in that position he was well-known for his value-based leadership, believing that “the best companies and leaders operate with a clear purpose and consistent set of principles or values.”

What the VA must do right now is to dismantle the bureaucracy, break down the culture of indifference, and review its commitment to the core values of the Department. There is no higher calling than to take care of the men and women who served our country.

Mr. McDonald shares that dedication to making certain our veterans have access to quality care—the best our Nation can offer—and he is focused and ready to take on the challenges that lie ahead. At least he convinced me that is the case.

There is now, fortunately, compromise legislation poised to pass both the House and Senate this week that will soon offer veterans more access to the quality care they deserve. Although this legislation is significant, it is impossible for Congress to mandate a change in attitude. Leaders can change attitudes at the Department. Congress does not have the power to control or develop a workforce that treats veterans like patriots, deserving care from a grateful nation, rather than to make them feel as though they are a burden.

Leadership throughout the institution, starting with Bob McDonald at the top, must command the VA to head down a new path of redemption and hope. We must create an agency that is more cost-effective, more compassionate, and more caring toward the veterans it serves. The VA must become an agency that is worthy of the service and sacrifice of our Nation’s veterans.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

NOMINATION OF ROBERT ALAN McDONALD TO BE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:45 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, before I begin I do want to take a moment to commend the chairmen of the Veterans’ Affairs Committees in both the House and the Senate for their commitment to reaching a deal that puts our veterans first and gives the VA the tools they need to address immediate challenges.

More importantly, I really applaud their work to build and strengthen the VA system in order to continue to deliver the best care for our Nation’s heroes over the long term.

The deal they announced yesterday is a very important step toward addressing a lot of issues that we know exist within the VA system, but it cannot be the final step. As transparency and accountability increase at the VA, so will the investigations and reports of additional concerns, requiring even more action from the VA, from the administration, and from this Congress.

However, as Chairman MILLER said yesterday, we cannot legislate good character here in Congress. It is going to be up to the leadership at the Department of Veterans Affairs to truly enact those reforms.

So I have come to the floor today in support of the nomination of Robert McDonald, someone I believe has the skills necessary to make these necessary changes as the next VA Secretary.

As I told Mr. McDonald last week, he is faced with a truly monumental task. Even as we pass comprehensive legislation to bring significant reforms at the VA to reduce wait times, to improve accountability, there are still many serious challenges the VA must address.

Twenty-two veterans still take their own lives each day. Thousands of veterans are alone, coping with sexual assaults. And while the Department has made commendable progress, it will be an uphill battle as we work to eliminate veterans homelessness and the claims backlog. Mr. McDonald will have to grapple with these and many more issues—all on day one.

When I met with Mr. McDonald in my office a few weeks ago, he told me he was one of the veterans who was lost in the system during his transition from military life to civilian life. So I trust—I trust—he understands what a critical moment this is for the VA and why we must finally fix many of these systemic and cultural challenges.

We have all made a promise to those who have signed up to serve. So I encourage my colleagues to support this nomination. I am hopeful the steps we are taking here this week on behalf of our Nation’s heroes will finally ignite the much-delayed reforms our veterans have been demanding and they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I stand today not to rehash with my colleagues the crisis that exists at the Veterans’ Administration or to share it with the American people. They know the story, and especially our Nation’s veterans, who have been given the runaround.

I am here to highlight a success in the Senate. See, my colleagues, on July 7, 2014—not even a month ago—we received the nomination for the new VA Secretary from the President.

On July 22 of this month, we had a confirmation hearing on that nomina-

tion. On July 23—the next day—Robert McDonald was passed unanimously out of the committee. Today—before the end of July—we are on the Senate floor to confirm Robert McDonald as the next VA Secretary.

I rise to urge my colleagues to support this nomination. The VA needs a confirmed Secretary in place to begin a long, arduous process of reform and cultural change.

By now, our colleagues probably know that Bob McDonald is a veteran himself. He is a graduate of West Point. He served 5 years in active duty, and served most of that time at Fort Bragg, NC. So I consider him one of ours.

He spent more than 30 years working for Procter & Gamble—I think the most competitive manufacturing company in the world. His work led him across the globe. But he also had prominent roles at a number of other organizations—Xerox, United States Steel Corporation, and the Business Roundtable.

Mr. McDonald has frequently lectured to groups on leadership skills, and his leadership philosophy was highlighted in the book “The Leader’s Compass.” He is the type of leader we need at the VA at this very crucial time.

Bob McDonald clearly has the experience to run an organization as large and as diverse as the Department of Veterans Affairs. Perhaps more importantly, he has selflessly agreed to take the challenge of leading the VA at its most critical time—something many people might have passed on.

I hope this week, in addition to this nomination, we will pass legislation to help the VA and its next leader address the systemic problems with access to VA health care and a corrosive culture that led to this crisis. But that legislation would be just one step. An enormous amount of work must be done from within the VA to rebuild its reputation and to turn it into an agency that will live up to the expectations of our veterans and a nation grateful to them for their service. We need a strong leader to do that, and I am glad Robert McDonald has agreed to serve his country once again in this important role.

The nomination received the unanimous support of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee. I urge my colleagues: Confirm Robert McDonald as the next Secretary of the VA, and let’s get on with the important work of reform at that agency.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, my colleague from North Carolina has just spoken on behalf of the nomination of Robert McDonald to be the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I will do likewise. He has also spoken of his background as a graduate of West Point, as an Army officer, and as the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world.

I had the occasion to meet with Mr. McDonald, and he could be the man of the hour. I hope he will be. He looks that way now.

With that in mind, I rise today in support of Robert McDonald's nomination for Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is my hope that Robert McDonald will bring a renewed commitment, energy, and acumen to address the Department's systemic problems that we all know exist.

The allegations against the Department of Veterans Affairs are incredibly serious. Therefore, I rise in defense of our Nation's veterans. Our veterans have put themselves in harm's way to defend us, and I think it is only right that we do everything in our power to defend them and their interests when they return home.

Allegations that veterans were not only denied timely access to care but that scheduling delays, secret waiting lists, and lost records may have led to veterans' deaths are totally unacceptable. These allegations of mismanagement and cover-up at the Veterans' Administration are beyond disturbing; they are sickening, they need to be corrected, and they need to be corrected immediately.

Our veterans deserve better. Our veterans have earned these benefits through their dedicated service and sacrifice to our Nation, and the VA must correct these problems, not just study them. It is my hope that Robert McDonald will actively work to address these tremendous challenges.

But according to the VA's recent nationwide audit, new patients using the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System waited an average of over 74 days to see a primary care doctor. That is totally unacceptable. That is nearly three times greater than the national average of 27 days for new patient wait times. I look forward to working with the new VA Secretary to review the Department's plan to initiate corrective action, both in Alabama and across the Nation.

While the VA's wait time statistics are certainly disturbing to all of us, the problem does not end there. Allegations that VA employees may have submitted false records to justify their own receipt of performance bonuses suggest the possibility that the deceit and mistreatment I have described may also have been compounded by a lot of fraud.

In May, Appropriations Committee Chairwoman BARBARA MIKULSKI and I wrote a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder and called on the Department of Justice to begin appropriate criminal and civil investigations into allegations of misconduct at the Veterans' Administration. We have also recommended that the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill—and we serve as the chair and ranking member of that committee—provide the resources for these investigations. The Veterans Affairs and Military Construction appropriations bill provides

an additional \$5 million to investigate VA scheduling practices. And legislation introduced this week requests an additional \$17 billion to improve the VA over the next 3 years.

While I commend these efforts to initiate corrective action, I believe it is only a starting point. A lack of funding is not the mainspring of the VA's troubled past. I look forward to working with the Presiding Officer and others—with the new VA Secretary—to ensure these problems at the VA are rectified as soon as possible before any more veterans are adversely affected.

Solving the issues at the VA has never been more imperative than it is today, as American service members continue to risk their lives every day for our Nation. Support for our Armed Forces must never waiver, and it must be just as strong when they return home. Who will fight our wars in the future if we do not prove that we respect our veterans today?

Veterans have risked their lives for the freedoms we all enjoy and thus should receive the care they most assuredly deserve and have earned. Defending veterans' access to timely medical care today is the very least, I believe, we can do because they defended us first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

ISRAEL

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, a part of the appropriations supplemental bill we will consider tomorrow is approximately \$245 million—I think I have that figure right—for the additional assistance to the Israeli Government for the Iron Dome system.

The United States has been assisting Israel in order to be able to buy this system. To the credit of the scientists and the military planners in Israel, they developed this system, and it is a very sophisticated system. As a matter of fact, when you watch the rockets go off, you will see an incoming round coming, in this case from Gaza, often without any precision guidance.

That is an interesting thing, that they are shooting at urbanized areas where the general civilian population is, and they have incoming rounds that no one knows where they are going; thus, the need for a sophisticated radar that can track it and distinguish first if it is going to fall in an area where there is nobody, where there is nothing in the way of equipment that would be harmed and, therefore, save the ordnance that otherwise would be shot. But the radar is so sophisticated that within seconds and fractions of seconds it can determine that, and then shoot off the round that will intercept the incoming round.

It is a sight to behold to see this Iron Dome rocket go upward and then change its trajectory, almost at a 90-degree angle, to home in on the incoming warhead, and they have a 90-percent success rate.

When this system was first produced, it was so successful that the Israeli

people, who had been bombed from outside their territory and had been accustomed to running to bunkers, to shelters, to places where they could be safe, with the institution of Iron Dome, often would come outside and see this aerial fireworks display because it had such a tremendous success rate.

Now things have changed because in the latest conflict with Hamas—and this is just in the course of the last 3 or so weeks—over 2,300 rockets have been fired into Israel. Hamas continues to fire more rockets.

Each night, if you turn on your television news shows, you see another display of all of this going on over on that side of the planet. Thus the need to supply more of the Iron Dome system and the ordnance that goes with it. And thus there will be this item that will be part of the supplemental appropriations request. I commend it to our colleagues to vote for it. It is a system that consistently the U.S. has helped to fund. It has saved a lot of lives.

Remember, the ordnance that is being shot into Israel is usually not a guided system. That is part of the terror that is being aimed at Israel, because it is to inflict casualties upon a civilian population. Yet, with this sophisticated system, 90-percent effective, it is saving a lot of lives. That is what I wanted to share with the Senate.

I yield the floor, and I ask unanimous consent that the time during quorum calls be charged against both sides.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise today filled with anguish and heartbreak that is shared by so many Americans who have been watching over the past week as countless innocent children and innocent civilians have been killed and live in states of great fear or even terror. Millions are running for bomb shelters time and time again. We are seeing people in Gaza killed or maimed and seeing people in Israel live under the terror in the sky and terror coming from below.

I want to stand resolute and clear about the true cause of this crisis. That lies squarely with Hamas, a terrorist organization whose ends do not start and finish with the well-being of the Palestinian people. Their primary focus and their clear agenda is not peace for their people. Written into their very charter is the firm determination to eliminate the State of Israel. They have proven this evil determination to do everything necessary to achieve their goal. They are willing

to kill Israelis. They are willing to kill Americans. They have killed them both. Even worse, they are willing to put innocent Palestinians in harm's way, causing death and destruction within their own communities, to their own children, to their hospitals and to their schools.

They are in the interests of wracking up casualties to add what they consider, in a warped way, moral force for their terrorist aim. I believe clearly in the evidence that this terrorist organization is willing to stop at no end in order to build their tunnels and to advocate and advance their independence.

They are willing to deny their people food. They are willing to deny their people construction materials that could be building schools and building infrastructure. They are willing to deny medical supplies. They are willing to deny a higher standard of living in order to support clearly terrorist activities.

This is unacceptable. This is unacceptable. This is unacceptable. We as Americans cannot advocate for or in any way accept a false peace that will allow Hamas, a terrorist organization, to continue their effort to destroy the State of Israel. Hamas is not seeking peace. Hamas is not seeking the peaceful coexistence between two states. What they are simply doing is they are willing to cause death and destruction to destroy Israel. Hamas is not a democratically elected organization. They are a terrorist organization. They do not speak for the Palestinian people. Hamas speaks for Hamas.

Their history of killing Americans and Israelis and putting countless of their own people in harm's way, causing their destruction and their denial of the basics, must be stopped. For the sake of the Palestinian people and for the sake of the Israeli people, we as a Nation cannot support any measure or any agenda that gives this terrorist organization harbor or support, that gives this terrorist organization any advantage in trying to achieve their end.

We cannot in this Nation advocate for that kind of false peace that allows Hamas to go back to tunneling, to firing rockets, to hiding missiles in schools and in hospitals, and putting more innocent children in harm's way. We as Americans must advocate for a true peace where two sides clearly recognize the right for peaceful coexistence and where both sides pledge to a true cessation of aggression, not a peace that allows one side to go back to its evil end, to tunneling, to plotting, to preparing just for the next attack. We have seen this before in recent history. We cannot allow it again. Right now we are in a state of crisis. America's voice must be resolute.

We stand with our allies. We stand with the democratic State of Israel. We stand against terrorism.

This is why today I come before you in support of the \$225 million in additional funding requested by the Depart-

ment of Defense to ensure that the Iron Dome in Israel remains equipped to protect civilians from Hamas-fired rockets.

Hamas has fired over 2,500 rockets at Israel over the past 3 weeks, while putting innocent Palestinians at risk to protect their stockpiles and their evil ends. Yesterday alone 51 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel.

In this time of crisis, America must stand for a true peace for the Palestinian people and for the Israeli people. Now, as a terrorist organization has evil ends to destroy the State of Israel, we must stand with our ally. We must stand with the State of Israel. We must stand for peace. Therefore, I support this expenditure and continue a resolute, unwavering, and unequivocal support of the continuance of the State of Israel.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I am pleased that the Senate is taking action this week on two extremely important measures for our Nation's veterans. First, Congress is poised to pass the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. This compromise, bipartisan legislation will, for the first time, provide our Nation's veterans who cannot easily get into a Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, health care facility, the ability that most Americans already have: to choose their own doctor. I am also extremely pleased that the legislation allows senior managers of the VA to be fired if they fail to do their jobs.

The Senate is also set to approve the nomination of Mr. Robert McDonald to head the VA. As important as our legislation is for fixing the VA, we cannot legislate a change in culture. Only the head of an agency can reform a toxic culture that allowed veterans to die on wait lists while senior officials lied in order to collect their bonuses.

I have met with Mr. McDonald and we see eye to eye on the massive problems that need to be fixed and the challenges that lie ahead. I am confident he is the right person with the right experience to lead the VA during this challenging time. He is a veteran himself but also has decades of private sector management experience that will serve him well in implementing the Veterans Choice Card and repairing the culture of the VA to focus on the veteran and restore honesty and accountability to that workforce. I thank him for accepting this challenge to serve the Nation again and look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as we have learned over the past several months, there has been a clear and inexcusable lack of well-earned quality care and timely service provided to many veterans who depend on it from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I hope that the confirmation of Robert McDonald as VA Secretary will be the next step forward in ensuring that our veterans and their families receive the benefits, compensation, and support services they rightfully deserve. While

I continue to recognize the hard work and commitment of the many men and women working in the VA system, the broader organizational culture has failed to harness and strengthen individual efforts in order to fulfill our promises to men and women that serve and their families.

When he assumes his new post Robert McDonald will have his work cut out for him at the VA, and he must lead the Department's deep soul-searching. It is my hope that his management experience at Procter & Gamble, including his experience addressing inefficiencies in a corporate entity, will make him the right man for the job. The replacement of a Cabinet Secretary alone does not increase accountability, nor does it reform the underlying problems that enabled the environment we now find ourselves in. These foundational reforms must take place throughout the management of the VA system, and they must address long-term, as well as short-term, challenges.

I was also pleased to hear that after many rounds of negotiations, Senator SANDERS and his counterpart in the House have finally reached a compromise that addresses many of these needed reforms. I commend them both, and I hope this legislation will be swiftly brought to the Senate and House floors and then signed by President Obama, so we can get back on track in serving our veterans as they so honorably have served our Nation. I look forward to working with the future Secretary McDonald to ensure that timely access to quality care for our veterans and their families is the ultimate priority of the VA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Robert Alan McDonald, of Ohio, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I request the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 243 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Graham	Murphy
Barrasso	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Nelson
Bennet	Harkin	Paul
Blumenthal	Hatch	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Pryor
Booker	Heitkamp	Reed
Boozman	Heller	Reid
Boxer	Hirono	Risch
Brown	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Cantwell	Isakson	Sanders
Cardin	Johanns	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Scott
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Chambliss	Kaine	Shaheen
Coats	King	Shelby
Coburn	Kirk	Stabenow
Cochran	Klobuchar	Tester
Collins	Landrieu	Thune
Coons	Leahy	Toomey
Corker	Lee	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Levin	Udall (NM)
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Cruz	Markey	Walsh
Donnelly	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Enzi	McConnell	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Menendez	Wicker
Fischer	Merkley	Wyden
Flake	Mikulski	
Franken	Moran	

NOT VOTING—3

Alexander Roberts Schatz

The nomination was confirmed.

NOMINATION OF LARRY EDWARD ANDRE, JR., TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL STEPHEN HOZA TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

NOMINATION OF JOAN A. POLASCHIK TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Larry Edward Andre, Jr., of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; Michael Stephen Hoza, of Washington, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon; Joan A. Polaschik, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign

Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

VOTE ON ANDRE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on the Andre nomination.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Larry Edward Andre, Jr., of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON HOZA NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on the Hoza nomination.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Michael Stephen Hoza, of Washington, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON POLASCHIK NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on the Polaschik nomination.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Joan A. Polaschik, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to the consideration of H.R. 5021, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5021) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3582

(Purpose: To Modify the Provisions Relating to Revenue)

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I call up amendment 3582 from the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN] proposes an amendment number 3582.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of Wednesday, July 23, 2014, under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the amendment that has just been offered is an amendment the distinguished senior Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH, and I have worked on for many weeks. It is a bipartisan agreement on emergency transportation funding that the Senate Finance Committee reported virtually unanimously 2 weeks ago.

I urge our colleagues to support this amendment as a replacement for title II of the House legislation. I will briefly describe why.

As the Senate debates transportation funding, it is abundantly clear that all sides agree on the need for a long-term plan to rebuild the Nation's infrastructure. A number of our colleagues, led by Chair BOXER, a number of Republicans, Senator CORKER, and Senator CARPER have made that point repeatedly, and it is one I share.

We cannot have a big-league economy with little-league transportation, and the chair of the Environment and Public Works committee, Senator BOXER, has consistently been on target, calling for a long-term plan to rebuild the Nation's infrastructure. The reality is that every Member of this body has constituents who are driving on highways full of potholes and ruts, and our citizens end up having to write a big check for car repairs because of it.

The best way to fix America's transportation system is with a long-term plan. The reality, however, is that to get to the long-term plan, what is needed first is a short-term path so we do not have the transportation equivalent of a government shutdown where we don't have the contracts being let and thousands of our people are put out of work, and a big set of economic dominos starts to fall. We need a short-term solution to prevent that from happening. That is what the Senate has before us today under a proposal from the Senate Finance Committee which