

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now go into executive session to consider the nomination of Rodney E. Slater, of Arkansas, to be Secretary of Transportation.

NOMINATION OF RODNEY E. SLATER OF ARKANSAS TO BE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I yield myself 5 minutes from the time allocated to Chairman MCCAIN.

Mr. President, last week I had the opportunity to speak before the Commerce and Environment and Public Works Committees on behalf of my good friend and our nominee for Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater. I am proud today, and honored today to be able to rise before the entire Senate body and once again voice my support for the President's choice for Secretary of Transportation.

I have known Rodney Slater since the 1980's, when I was first elected to the Arkansas State House of Representatives and Rodney was the executive assistant for then Governor Bill Clinton. From the very beginning of our relationship, I had the deepest respect for Rodney on both a personal and professional level.

Professionally, I think there is no question whatsoever that he is qualified to become the Secretary of Transportation. Before coming to Washington, Rodney served for 6 years as commissioner and later chairman of the Arkansas State Highway Commission. During this time, Rodney, without hesitation, tackled the great challenge of improving a poor rural State's infrastructure. He took on that challenge, not just trying to please, but trying to do the right thing. Arkansas, like most of our States, is a very diverse place with many competing regions. Rodney, though he hailed from the delta, was always fair to every part of the State of Arkansas. I think that is a preeminent qualification for somebody who is going to be Secretary of Transportation of the United States. He will be fair with all modes of transportation. He will be fair to all parts of our Nation.

In the last 4 years, Rodney has served as Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, where he has faced the demands of implementing ISTEA. As you know, hearings on the reauthorization of ISTEA will begin next week. We will be dealing with some of the most important and complicated issues of transportation when we consider this vital piece of legislation. Rodney's experience with national and local transportation needs as well as his expertise in the intricacies of ISTEA give me great confidence he will be able to work with Congress

in a manner that will help us form legislation that will not only be fair but will address the Nation's pressing transportation needs into the 21st century. Certainly I look forward to working with a Secretary of Transportation who brings hands-on experience to the Department.

On a personal note, I cannot adequately express my esteem for Rodney, for the courage he has shown in overcoming a childhood of deprivation. He is a native of Marianna, AR, the Mississippi Delta region, one of most impoverished of our Nation. Many children grow up in those conditions and find that poverty overcomes them. They never come close to reaching their full potential. Rodney serves, I believe, as a role model for countless Americans who pull themselves up from poverty to make the American dream a reality. If you judge a person from what they overcome, then Rodney Slater has overcome a lot, and should be esteemed. He has not only benefited his own life, but the lives of those he has touched through his selfless public service. His experience in the region of the world he came from, I think, gives him a unique perspective of the value of our Nation's infrastructure and the role it plays in economic development.

Another one of the great things about Rodney, which I have expressed many times, is his commitment to his family. Nobody could question that after watching the confirmation hearings. Several of his family members came there at each time.

I want to reiterate my comments from last week. I have no hesitancy whatsoever in giving my support for Rodney Slater to be Secretary of the Department of Transportation. I believe the President made a fine choice and I look forward to casting my vote for that confirmation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. HOLLINGS. The distinguished Senator from Arkansas has been so laudatory, I think the RECORD should show that Rodney Slater is a Democrat.

The fact of the matter is, he has strong, strong bipartisan support because he truly comes as an appointment, not on account of the color of his skin, but the content of his character. As the distinguished Senator pointed out, he started in the most humble Mississippi Delta section of Arkansas, attended the public schools, graduated, then, from Eastern Michigan University, and then from the University of Arkansas School of Law at Fayetteville.

Working as a commissioner on the Arkansas Highway Commission, he then was able to serve as its chairman and came here just almost 4 years ago as the Federal Highway Administrator. You only have to go to Northridge, CA, to ask how he did. Right after that earthquake out in California, Mr. Slater cut through all the bureaucracy.

His actions there, instituted immediately, facilitated the provision of alternative transportation, and then Mr. Slater's FHWA allowed the repair and rebuilding of the damaged highways out there in record time.

He has become familiar with all modes of transportation, working at DOT—the civilian airline system; all the railroads, including the Nation's rail passenger service, Amtrak; the water borne transportation system, and everything else. So he is totally familiar with it. I don't know any better compliment than that related by my distinguished colleague from Arkansas. Mr. Slater appeared with the strongest bipartisan support of any nominee I have seen in my time up here, and I think he deserves it. I have watched him over the past 4 years, as I have watched other Federal Highway Administrators, but none has done a more resourceful job, a more understanding job, and a more effective job than Rodney Slater of Arkansas.

It's quite a journey from those rural roots to being chairman of the Arkansas State Highway Department to administering the Nation's highway program and now, I hope, to Secretary of Transportation. Mr. Slater's journey began with a loving family and community, and we should, as he does, pay tribute to them. They instilled in him the thirst for education, the drive to succeed at every job, and the determination to be fair in whatever he did. These are qualities that we should look for in every nominee for every office. But in addition to Mr. Slater's personal story there are several other excellent reasons for confirming Mr. Slater in this very important Cabinet position.

He has high-level experience in transportation dating back to 1987. Mr. Slater has served as a member of the Arkansas State Highway Commission and later as the commission chairman. In these positions he received high praise for his ability to bring together diverse interests in order to get the job done. Part of Mr. Slater's success is attributed to his willingness to listen to disparate points of view and a desire to learn from others.

Mr. Slater was appointed to the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA] by President Clinton in 1993. As Administrator, Mr. Slater managed a \$20 billion annual budget in an agency with 3,500 employees and an office in every State. In that capacity, he impressed both local officials and Members of Congress with his ability to work within the system to get things done. During the last 4 years the FHWA under Mr. Slater has expanded our Nation's highways and linked isolated communities to new jobs and opportunities.

One important example of this nominee's abilities is the response of the FHWA to the devastating earthquake that took place in Northridge, CA. Mr. Slater received high marks from those who witnessed his ability to cut red-tape and lessen response time so that critical funds would be released

promptly to the communities hit by the earthquake. His adept maneuvering through the bureaucracy resulted in the provision of alternate transportation and the rebuilding of vital highways in record time.

In nominating Mr. Slater, President Clinton said: “* * * he was recommended by more people from more places in more ways for this job than any person for any position I have ever seen.” Nothing is more true. Look at the Members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, who have supported this nomination. During the Commerce Committee hearing on his nomination, Mr. Slater was endorsed by Senators WARNER, BUMPERS, and HUTCHINSON and Congressmen HUTCHINSON and BERRY. That’s a good cross-section of support—the chairman of the Transportation Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and four members of the Arkansas congressional delegation, two from each party. He has also received high praise from our House colleagues. Congressman WOLF, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, called the nomination “a natural.” House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman BUD SHUSTER said he considers the nominee one who “can work well with both parties.”

Mr. Slater’s nomination is not just endorsed within the Washington Beltway. Indeed, the transportation industry uniformly praised Slater both for his abilities as the FHWA Administrator and for his interest in learning the promises and prospects of the other modes of transportation.

From my perspective as Senator from South Carolina, I am very pleased to have a nominee who has a firm grasp of the highway system that is so vital to my State. Moreover, in Mr. Slater we have the opportunity to confirm as Secretary of Transportation a man who knows the value of the other modes of transportation as well: The Nation’s civil aviation system, Amtrak, and the country’s waterborne transportation system.

With Mr. Slater, we will have a Secretary who knows that we must rebuild the Nation’s infrastructure if we are to grow and prosper in the 21st century. He is a man who believes, as I do, that the number of ships that steam into our ports means little if road or rail transport is insufficient to speed the cargo on its way to points inland; and that increasing tourism in Charleston or Boston or New Orleans won’t matter unless trains and planes are available to bring the tourists to those cities.

He is also a man who is well aware that a carefully constructed reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 [ISTEA] can give us the boost we need toward the year 2000. We in South Carolina have worthwhile intermodal projects that need funding. These intermodal projects will relieve choke points in the States, giving us a start

on the seamless transportation network that ISTEA envisions. An example of one of our most pressing issues for ISTEA is the long overdue replacement of the bridges over the Cooper River in Charleston. These bridges are essential to the movement of cargo to and from the port.

In conclusion, Mr. Slater has earned my support and my vote because I am impressed with the intelligence, dedication, and ability I believe he will bring to this job. I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming this excellent appointment.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a person who has been honored by President Clinton to serve as the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater. Last week, Mr. Slater testified before the Commerce Committee. He talked about his commitment to public service, his background, and his desire to make sure that the United States remains the leader in aviation. He talked about the challenges facing the Transportation Department, but more importantly, the challenges facing all of us and our constituents.

Mr. Slater showed himself to be forthright and straightforward. In response to some tough questions, he did not flinch. He looked each of us in the eye and committed to work through difficult problems, to rebuild our Nation’s roads and bridges, and to make our transportation system as safe as possible. He also said something else in response to a tough, but fair comment from our chairman, Senator MCCAIN. He said he wanted to give people a reason to vote for someone, rather than against someone. Mr. Slater did that in his testimony.

Mr. Slater also brings something else to DOT—he has served for 4 years as the head of the Federal Highway Administration. Mr. Slater’s support before our committee was bipartisan, both Senators and Congressmen. Senator WARNER talked of his first-hand experience with Mr. Slater in working with flood victims in Virginia. Mr. Slater has similarly responded to problems in Kentucky and other States.

Mr. Slater is one of the first nominees for the Secretary’s position to have worked for one of the modal administrations. That experience alone will benefit our communities. Mr. Slater understands, for example, that opening up foreign aviation markets to our carriers will benefit our communities. Mr. Slater understands the importance of developing a new ISTEA bill. Mr. Slater recognizes the need to appoint members to the National Civil Aviation Review Commission, so that we can move forward with improving the Federal Aviation Administration. Funding for the FAA, improving aviation safety, and continuing to make strides in aviation security are matters that the new Secretary will confront on day one. Let’s make tomorrow day one.

Mr. Slater has many challenges ahead of him. We should let him get to

it as quickly as possible and I urge my colleagues to support this nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have about 4 minutes, I would say. Can I be yielded some time?

Mr. HOLLINGS. Yes, 4 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the distinguished Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Rodney E. Slater to be the Secretary of the Department of Transportation. Over the last four years, Mr. Slater has served the President and the Nation, and he has served well in his capacity as our Federal Highway Administrator. He has done so with the same distinction and effectiveness that he demonstrated previously while serving then-Governor Clinton in several capacities back in his home State of Arkansas.

I am pleased that the President has nominated such an able and accomplished and dedicated public official to head the Department of Transportation. We will face many critical challenges in the transportation arena in the next several months and years—the reauthorization of all of our critical highway and transit programs; the need to reform the entire financing mechanism for the Federal Aviation Administration; the need to find more Federal resources to stem the deterioration of our transportation infrastructure; the need to reverse the recent increase we are witnessing in drunk driving as well as the need to improve our safety record in all modes of transportation.

I heard the President speak about the dangers of smoking, and I am for the great crusade that has been conducted across this Nation against smoking. But I would like to see a similar crusade against drinking alcoholic beverages. Let’s have a crusade to match the crusade against smoking. Let’s have a crusade against drinking, because my wife, your wife, my daughters, my grandchildren can get into an automobile and leave the house and never come home alive again because of some drunken driver who is all over the highway. Let’s have a crusade against alcoholic beverages. I would be happy to help by speaking out against the drinking of alcohol.

I know from several meetings that I have had with Mr. Slater that he recognizes clearly how important a vibrant and efficient transportation system is to the Nation’s future. He knows that, as a nation, we have allowed our transportation infrastructure to deteriorate to the point that we have a backlog of unmet needs totaling well over \$100 billion. This backlog of unmet needs for unsafe bridges, deteriorated highways, airports, and transit systems serves as a continuing drag on our Nation’s productivity. He knows that poor highways restrict access to jobs, to schools

and to health care—that poorly maintained ships and waterways can lead to environmental disaster.

At my request, Mr. Slater has visited my home State of West Virginia on a number of occasions. He has seen first hand the benefits flowing to my constituents and the entire Nation from ongoing efforts such as the completion of Appalachian Corridor "G." But he also knows that much more needs to be done to improve mobility, not just in West Virginia but throughout the entire Nation.

Mr. Slater comes from humble origins, having been born in the small community of Tutwiler, MS. With a population of 1,391, just a few more people than we have in Sophia, WV, from where I come. Tutwiler has about 200 more residents than the town of my upbringing, Sophia, WV. I know something about humble beginnings. And I know that humble beginnings can give some people a clarity of vision and tenacity of purpose. These are the attributes that we find among true national leaders—and Rodney Slater's leadership at this vital time in the Nation's history as Secretary of Transportation will be critical as we strive to balance the Federal budget without decimating the Nation's physical infrastructure. I look forward to his confirmation. I am glad today to speak in support of his nomination enthusiastically and without any reservations.

I thank the Senator from South Carolina. I yield the floor.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to offer my strong support for Rodney Slater to be the next Secretary of Transportation.

Mr. President, as Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, Rodney Slater has demonstrated the leadership, intelligence, and vision that is required to lead the Department of Transportation. I am confident he will do an excellent job as Secretary.

During the past 4 years, Administrator Slater has overseen a \$20 billion U.S. Highway System and a nationwide work force of 3,500. In that capacity, he transformed FHWA policies and programs to better serve the people and industries who rely on our highway system. He has also been a strong advocate for the advancement of women and minorities.

As Secretary, Mr. Slater will play a critical role in ensuring that our Nation makes much-needed investments in our transportation infrastructure. I know he shares my commitment to that goal. Transportation generates 20 percent of our GNP, and every \$1 billion invested in our transportation system yields more than 25,000 construction-related jobs.

Investment in transportation is also necessary to keep us internationally competitive. Americans spend more than 1.6 million hours a day stuck in traffic, at a cost to U.S. businesses of about \$40 billion per year. That's a burden our economy simply cannot afford.

By reducing congestion, improving air quality and enhancing safety, effec-

tive transportation systems also improve our overall quality of life.

This year we are facing renewed debate on the importance of transportation as we discuss the authorization of ISTEA. And I am pleased that Rodney Slater will be taking the lead for the administration in the reauthorization effort.

Mr. President, ISTEA is a bold and innovative law that is helping to increase mobility, ensure access to jobs and sustain our environment for future generations. It has improved planning and flexibility, emphasized local decision making and encouraged new technology.

Mr. President, we need to extend ISTEA to meet the transportation and economic challenges of the 21st century. We need to build on the legislation's innovative intermodal system. We should continue to promote State and local flexibility. We should continue to use technology, or so-called Intelligent Transportation Systems, to increase our capacity and efficiency. And we must maintain ISTEA's commitment to promoting safety.

I believe Rodney Slater shares my commitment to these goals, and I am looking forward to working closely with him throughout the debate on ISTEA.

Mr. President, as we develop so-called ISTEA Two, all of us will need to remember that the choices we make will directly affect the lives of millions of ordinary Americans. Our decisions will affect where and how we live. Where we work. How we'll get there. And how long it will take.

In many cases, our choices also will be a matter of life and death for thousands of Americans. And we shouldn't forget that. We will be deciding the safety of our roads, our rails, and our air travel. Unfortunately, over the past 2 years, safety often has taken a back seat to other considerations. We have lost our national speed limit. We have lost our motorcycle helmet and seat-belt laws. And, meanwhile, the problem of drunk driving has worsened. In my view, it's long past time that we made safety a top priority.

Mr. President, I raised this issue with Administrator Slater during the informational hearing in front of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. He assured me that safety is, and will continue to be, his top priority as Secretary of Transportation. I commend him for that commitment.

Administrator Slater also assured me that he is an advocate for healthy transportation funding this fiscal year and in the years ahead. In the coming months, Congress and the administration will be working together to balance the budget. As that process moves forward, all of us who care about transportation will have to work hard to ensure that transportation is given the priority it deserves.

Mr. President, I am confident that Rodney Slater will be a Transportation Secretary who will work to maintain

our infrastructure, to preserve ISTEA, to enhance safety, and to ensure adequate funding for our transportation needs. I look forward to working closely with him to ensure that all Americans can travel safely and efficiently as we move into the 21st century.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the confirmation of Administrator Rodney Slater to be the next Secretary of Transportation for this great Nation.

With 1 of every 10 workers and over \$700 billion dollars being devoted annually to transportation products and services, we certainly need a person of Mr. Slater's caliber.

Transportation touches the lives of each and every American citizen on a daily basis; and while we can be proud of our railways, interstate, highways, and airport systems, there are still significant challenges which lie ahead.

Mr. President, both personal and business travel are at all time highs and the concern for safety is shared by all Americans.

We are continually facing the problems of congestion and pollution in metropolitan areas while attempting to meet the demand for increased mobility.

And, in New Mexico, like many other rural States, we are witnessing a demographic shift which is placing a strain on our current regional transportation systems.

In addition, there are still the growing demands for speed and efficiency in the transportation of goods. With the emergence of just-in-time manufacturing, transportation authorities must continue to research transportation innovations and utilize new technologies which will help preserve time and money.

Mr. President, I believe Mr. Slater's creativity and fresh thinking will be an asset to the President as we begin to face these issues and look towards the future of transportation in America. And that future begins with the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act [ISTEA].

I believe we must build upon the priorities set forth in this important legislation while continuing to provide the necessary funding to ensure the strongest transportation infrastructure possible.

ISTEA's reauthorization must be based upon principles that will sustain a strong globally-competitive economy and ensure the mobility and safety of our people.

I believe Mr. Slater recognizes the challenges ahead of him as Secretary of Transportation and I am truly encouraged by his commitment.

Administrator Slater's history is clearly one of hard work and dedication. He served as assistant attorney general for the State of Arkansas and later worked as an assistant to the Governor on economic and community programs.

Administrator Slater began his focus on transportation by serving as the

chairman of the Arkansas State Highway Commission.

And I believe in this era of new federalism, his experience in running a state highway agency will be an excellent background as we look to provide State governments with enough flexibility to produce local answers to transportation issues.

In addition, Administrator Slater served as a member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Executive Committee of Commissions and Boards and is currently serving as the first African-American to head the Federal Highway Administration where he worked as an effective leader in escorting the National Highway System legislation through Congress.

In speaking with Administrator Slater on many occasions, I have always been impressed with his desire to participate in open discussions with one priority in mind—and that is to reach a solution which is best for the American people.

In fact, as Federal Highway Administrator, Mr. Slater personally traveled from coast to coast as part of an outreach program which he initiated.

From Buffalo, NY to Laredo, TX and from San Francisco, CA to our Nation's Capital—Administrator Slater sat down with real people to discuss their thoughts and concerns about our Nation's highways and interstates.

I believe Administrator Slater, in his new capacity as Secretary of Transportation, will continue to provide all Americans with a transportation network that will be second to none.

And it is in my judgment that Administrator Slater has first hand knowledge as to what the future needs are for this Nation's transportation infrastructure.

I commend President Clinton for his nomination, and shall cast my vote for his confirmation with confidence and wish him the best as he begins to face the transportation challenges of this great Nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my strong support for the confirmation of Rodney Slater as the new Secretary for the Department of Transportation.

Mr. Slater has the experience, the sense of purpose, and the commitment to make sure that our transportation infrastructure is ready for the new century. He is well suited to head the Department of Transportation, a large and complex agency which is so vital to America's infrastructure. Transportation is one of the underpinnings of our economy, and plays an essential role in the daily lives of all Americans. A safe and efficient system of transportation is needed to keep our growing economy strong.

Rodney Slater understands that transportation is an engine for job creation. He knows that it provides hundreds of good paying jobs in the development of transportation technologies,

in construction, and in the delivery of transportation services. From the person who drives the light rail train through my own hometown of Baltimore, to the scientists and engineers designing the transportation networks of the future, transportation means jobs. Mr. Slater understands that.

Under Mr. Slater's guidance, the Department of Transportation will continue to encourage new technologies, promote safety, and protect our environment. He is the right person to manage our national infrastructure, and lead the way to better and safer roads and transit systems, airports, and to keep us globally competitive.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with Mr. Slater on making the Department of Transportation a more effective and efficient agency. We must work together to meet the transportation needs and challenges that we face as we enter the 21st century. Much has been done and continues to be done as we work as partners to revitalize America's transportation system.

Mr. Slater is equipped for this task. He was appointed to the Arkansas State Highway Commission in 1987, and made its chairman in 1992. Mr. Slater understands the needs of local and State governments. He understands the need for our rural, suburban, and urban areas to be connected, and provide the access to opportunity.

As the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, Mr. Slater has shown his commitment to put people first, and to rebuild America. He has listened to thousands of constituents and incorporated their concerns into the Federal Highway Administration's decisionmaking process. He has led this agency as it rebuilt and expanded our Nation's highways, and in the process created jobs and opportunities.

I look forward to working with Mr. Slater as he works to meet the transportation needs of Maryland and those across this great Nation. I urge my colleagues to confirm the nomination of Mr. Rodney Slater as Secretary of the Department of Transportation.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, I rise to support the confirmation of Rodney Slater to be the new Secretary of Transportation. Perhaps only the Secretary of Agriculture has as a profound effect on economy of my State as the Secretary of Transportation.

As a large geography, small population State at the Nation's crossroads, Nebraska has a great deal at stake in America's transportation policy. Perhaps only the Secretary of Agriculture has as profound an effect on the economy of my State as the Secretary of Transportation.

Coming from rural Arkansas, Rodney Slater understands the transportation problems of Nebraska and the Nation. He has demonstrated skill and vision as Administrator of the Federal Highways Administration.

One of the most important bills the 105th Congress will consider is the re-

authorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The new Secretary will lead the administration's efforts on this important bill. The Senate begins its work on the reauthorization of ISTEA with this confirmation. As the Senate debates the nomination of Rodney Slater to be Secretary of Transportation, I would like to take a few moments to discuss some of the transportation priorities I want our new Secretary and the Senate to consider.

First, the new Surface Transportation law should promote a national transportation infrastructure which addresses rural and urban needs. That legislation must recognize that transportation investments in small population, crossroads States like Nebraska contribute to the productivity and efficiency of the entire nation.

Second, ISTEA 2 should be truly intermodal by including an authorization for Amtrak, and assistance for communities dealing with an increasing density of rail traffic. The Congress has a tremendous opportunity to enhance safety where rails meet roads in America.

Third, safety must remain the pre-eminent focus of transportation policy. In spite of long-term progress on the safety front, more than 41,000 Americans will die and more than 3 million Americans will be injured this year on the Nation's roads and highways. We can reduce that number by focusing much needed attention on two groups of drivers—Teenagers and repeat offenders. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death among Americans ages 15-24. The reauthorization of ISTEA provides an opportunity to seriously address this problem.

Fourth, in aviation, I applaud the Secretary-designate for his strong statement in support of the Essential Air Service Program. Air service is critical to the economic survival of many rural communities. Last year, the Congress solved the chronic funding problems of the Essential Air Service program. I am pleased that the Secretary-designate supports that action.

Finally, Mr. President, I pledge to the new Secretary that I will continue to do everything I can to end the hemorrhage of the airways trust fund. The lapse of the aviation ticket tax is draining the trust fund at an astounding rate of \$18-20 million a day. As a new member of the Finance Committee, I consider funding the Nation's investments in airport safety, security, and efficiency a top priority. I am proud that our committee yesterday took swift, bipartisan action on this important matter.

Mr. President, with this confirmation, we begin work on the transportation policy for a new century. The Senate should not underestimate the importance of this task or the significance of this confirmation. Future employment, economic growth, international competitiveness, and national productivity are all at stake. I am confident that Rodney Slater understands

the importance of his mission and I look forward to working with the new Secretary.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support for the nomination of Rodney Slater to be the next Secretary of Transportation.

Most of my colleagues know Rodney Slater from his tenure as the Federal Highway Administrator—a position he has held since 1993. Mr. Slater has proven his ability to grasp and understand transportation issues that are important to all regions of this country.

Even though he is a native of Arkansas, I can tell my colleagues that he recognizes the needs of areas such as the West. In fact, he has traveled to Montana three times to see first hand the vast expanse of land and low population that is our State. These trips have enabled him to appreciate the true meaning of the word rural.

And this experience will come in handy in the coming months. One of the key issues the 105th Congress will face is the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act or ISTEA. This legislation will set the highway and transit funding levels for every State and an understanding of the needs of rural States will be critical. ISTEA expires on September 30 of this year and we have our work cut out for us.

There will be many difficult and controversial issues to be debated during reauthorization. One such issue will be the question of highway funding formulas. I would remind my colleagues that we are one Nation—not 50 separate ones. We all come from different States with diverse transportation needs. But our goal should be to craft a reauthorization bill that will move this country forward into the next century—not one that takes us back.

Mr. President, transportation in Montana is not just limited to highways. There is another important component of our transportation system—the Essential Air Service program.

The Essential Air Service program ensures that some of this country's most rural and vulnerable communities have access to air transportation. It is truly an essential transportation program.

Montana is second only to Alaska in the number of EAS communities—seven. Every year, Congress must fight for the necessary funding to continue this program. However, Mr. Slater has pledged his commitment to support this program. I look forward to working with him and the rest of the Department to ensure the stability of this program into the future.

Rodney Slater has repeatedly shown an ability to bring diverse interests together for a common goal. He has also displayed a skill for taking innovative approaches to many of the problems facing the transportation community. He has always been responsive to me and other Members of the Senate. It is

these skills that Congress will need during the reauthorization of ISTEA and other transportation matters.

Mr. President, I support this nomination without reservation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I am pleased to support the nomination of Rodney Slater to be the next Secretary of Transportation. Mr. Slater has distinguished himself by his fine service to the people of Arkansas and to the Nation as Federal Highway Administrator. I have had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Slater and discuss a range of transportation issues with him. I am confident that he has the necessary skills and knowledge to develop a national transportation policy and to prepare our Nation for the transportation challenges of the next century.

The greatest challenge before Mr. Slater is to establish a comprehensive transportation policy for the 21st century. When Mr. Slater came before the Commerce Committee, I spoke of the need to develop such a policy and I emphasized my belief that such a policy must prominently include passenger rail service as an integral component. Despite rail's proven safety, efficiency and reliability in Europe, Japan, and even here in the United States, our Nation continues to seriously underfund and shortchange passenger rail. Indeed, over half the Transportation Department's spending authority is devoted to highways and another quarter to aviation; rail is still in distant last place with roughly 3 percent of total spending authority. During the confirmation hearing, I stated that I believe the time is long overdue to change our approach and to afford greater consideration to our commitment to intermodalism. I hope to work with Mr. Slater in the years ahead to develop and deploy a comprehensive, financially stable, intercity transportation network that includes passenger rail as an integral component.

A second and important challenge Mr. Slater will face will be the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act or ISTEA. I am by no means alone in counting on the administration to play a central role in this debate. Soon, the administration will submit its proposal for reauthorizing ISTEA. I expect this proposal to fairly allocate highway funds and to consider the aging and crumbling infrastructure of the crowded cities in the Northeast. These cities are important population centers and significant gateways for international trade and tourism. Those of us representing northeastern States are placing great faith in Mr. Slater—faith that he will afford due consideration to our legitimate needs and will offer sufficient support to ensure that those needs are addressed in a fair and equitable manner.

I look forward to working with Mr. Slater in several other areas including

reforming the FAA, negotiating and implementing meaningful open-skies agreements with our trading partners, and implementing the train whistle ban in a manner that respects the safety records of the communities that will be affected.

I enthusiastically will vote in favor of Mr. Slater's confirmation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, the Senate, in just a minute, will vote on the nomination of Rodney Slater to serve the Nation as Secretary of Transportation.

I congratulate Mr. Slater on the honor of being selected by the President for this very important post, and I urge the Senate to confirm his nomination.

Mr. Slater currently serves as the top official at the Federal Highway Administration and has received much praise on both sides of the aisle and from across the country for his good work in that important capacity.

On January 29, the Senate Commerce Committee conducted a thorough hearing on the Slater nomination, and, yesterday, the committee voted unanimously to refer his nomination to the full Senate with our approval.

As part of the committee's examination, we submitted a battery of questions to the nominee regarding his qualifications and fitness to serve as Secretary; about his priorities in serving the transportation needs of our country; and about his plans to ensure that he and the Department effectively serve the public interest in keeping with the highest standards of professional conduct.

He faithfully responded to our many questions and while members may disagree about some of his policies, the nominee is experienced in the transportation arena; has proven himself to be a dedicated public servant; and has assured the committee that he has not engaged in any activity which would cast doubt on his ability or fitness to serve.

Mr. Slater, has a very difficult job ahead of him. The Transportation sector affects every facet of our country's economic and social life. The ability of our citizens and the Nation's goods to travel freely, economically and safely, will be directly and deeply influenced by the policies established by the new Secretary.

Our Nation faces severe challenges in the effort to keep our transportation systems the most modern, efficient, and safest in the world. In particular,

upgrading the Nation's highways, railways and aviation infrastructure in an era of necessary budget constraint will be especially difficult and will require vision and leadership.

Above all, the new Secretary's top priority must be protecting public safety in all modes of transportation. And, he must apply himself to prioritizing national needs and eliminating unjustified programs so that limited resources can flow to the Nation's most pressing requirements according to merit and need. Achieving these lofty goals will take a Secretary who can say no, as well as yes, and who can keep an unflinching eye on the interests of the country rather than on politics.

Mr. Slater, assured us that he understands the magnitude of the responsibilities awaiting the new Secretary, and is qualified and eager to take them on. Having questioned and examined this nominee, and given his track record of public service, the committee trusts and believes that is so. I urge my colleagues to confirm Rodney Slater, and we look forward to working with him to best serve the transportation needs of our Nation.

I ask for the yeas and nays on this vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. HOLLINGS. If my colleague would yield.

Mr. MCCAIN. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend—

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, under the previous order, we were supposed to vote at 3 o'clock. That is my understanding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That was the agreement.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I yield back remaining time.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Rodney E. Slater, of Arkansas, to be Secretary of Transportation? On this question the yeas and nays have been ordered and the clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. I announce that the Senator from Utah [Mr. BENNETT] and the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. THURMOND] are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 6 Ex.]

YEAS—98

| | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| Abraham | Bingaman | Bumpers |
| Akaka | Bond | Burns |
| Allard | Boxer | Byrd |
| Ashcroft | Breaux | Campbell |
| Baucus | Brownback | Chafee |
| Biden | Bryan | Cleland |

| | | |
|-----------|------------|---------------|
| Coats | Harkin | Moseley-Braun |
| Cochran | Hatch | Moynihan |
| Collins | Helms | Murkowski |
| Conrad | Hollings | Murray |
| Coverdell | Hutchinson | Nickles |
| Craig | Hutchison | Reed |
| D'Amato | Inhofe | Reid |
| Daschle | Inouye | Robb |
| DeWine | Jeffords | Roberts |
| Dodd | Johnson | Rockefeller |
| Domenici | Kempthorne | Roth |
| Dorgan | Kennedy | Santorum |
| Durbin | Kerrey | Sarbanes |
| Enzi | Kerry | Sessions |
| Faircloth | Kohl | Shelby |
| Feingold | Kyl | Smith, Bob |
| Feinstein | Landrieu | Smith, Gordon |
| Ford | Lautenberg | H. |
| Frist | Leahy | Snowe |
| Glenn | Levin | Specter |
| Gorton | Lieberman | Stevens |
| Graham | Lott | Thomas |
| Gramm | Lugar | Thompson |
| Grams | Mack | Torricelli |
| Grassley | McCain | Warner |
| Gregg | McConnell | Wellstone |
| Hagel | Mikulski | Wyden |

NOT VOTING—2

Bennett Thurmond

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. KERRY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair notes that under the previous order, the President shall be notified of the confirmation of the nomination of Rodney Slater.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, Rodney Earl Slater is the right choice to become the next U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He has earned the unanimous vote by which he was confirmed. He has taken a remarkable path from a childhood of poverty to being selected to head the \$39 billion Department of Transportation. His hard work and talents have proven invaluable to every effort he has undertaken.

Rodney was born in 1955 in the dirt-poor Mississippi Delta. His first taste of hard work came early, when as a boy he picked cotton and peaches. He was recruited to play football at Eastern Michigan University, rising to become co-captain of the team.

His performance in speech class so impressed his professor that he persuaded him to join the college's debate team. He went on to become a national finalist in debate competitions. The coach of his college debate team described him well: "I knew way back then that here was a very disciplined, goal-oriented young man who was driven by his own competitiveness. He wasn't competing against other students. He was competing against his own measure of success."

Rodney Slater went on to an outstanding career of public service. He served several years in the Arkansas State Attorney General's Office. After 4 years as an assistant to then-Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, he directed government relations for Arkansas State University.

In 1987, he was appointed to the powerful Arkansas State Highway Commis-

sion, making him the first African-American to hold the job. Five years later, he was promoted to chair the commission.

As Federal Highway Administrator since 1993, Mr. Slater has managed a \$20 billion annual budget in an agency with 3,500 employees and offices in every State. He tackled the politically difficult task of putting together the National Highway System, a 160,000-mile network of roadways. Stitching together that system involved painstaking negotiations with 50 State governments, regional transportation agencies, and city governments. Despite these difficulties, he won praise from all sides for his candor, political skills, and ability to work within the system to get things done.

Rodney Slater's nomination has drawn wide and bipartisan support. As President Clinton put it, he "was recommended by more people from more places in more ways for this job than any person for any position I have ever seen." He has won praise from leaders from both parties and both Houses of Congress. Senator JOHN WARNER, who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Transportation Subcommittee, described him best as "an effective partner with Congress."

As a true Arkansas traveler, Rodney has demonstrated he understands rural transportation needs. He has certainly become a good friend of South Dakota. When we needed help, in good times and bad, we knew we could count on him. South Dakotans are deeply grateful for his assistance, which we will never forget.

The nomination of Rodney Slater validates a life of hard work. He has earned this nomination. From his roots in rural Arkansas, he worked his way through college and law school. Here in Washington, he has rebuilt and expanded our Nation's highways and linked isolated communities to jobs and opportunities. He has built bridges both of steel and of goodwill to bring people closer together. He is the right person to help us meet the many transportation challenges we face as we enter the 21st century.

I supported Rodney Slater's nomination with enthusiasm. He fully deserved the unanimous vote by which he was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will return to legislative session.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the recess be delayed in order for Senator GRAHAM of Florida and Senator SESSIONS of Alabama and Senator GRAMS of Minnesota