

6 years. The reason we put in a 6-year bill was to provide the type of stability that enables those from the Governor and State legislatures to the various highway boards and commissions to do that type of planning.

All across this country today, in the wake of the instability of the marketplace and other economic indicators, millions and millions of men and women are dependent for their livelihood on this program going forward in an orderly way. Highways can't be built overnight. Weather has a very definite impact on the ability of the hands of these laboring people to build these highway systems. In some States, that envelope of weather is a matter of several months, primarily because of the weather conditions. But indeed during the course of the intense heat of summer, again, there are restrictive periods in which roads and highways can be built. It is for that reason that I ask this morning that we cannot be oblivious to what is taking place in the marketplace of our country and all over the world, this instability, at a time when this bill will be a very steady building block to add stability.

This vote will be the fourth to invoke cloture so that the Senate can proceed to the consideration of this legislation to reauthorize our Nation's surface transportation programs. This is needed because of the intent regarding campaign financing.

Mr. President, the funding level is \$145 billion. Stop and think about that—\$145 billion. That would benefit every single State. We have tried in this bill to equitably and fairly distribute these funds that would go from the State in the form of gasoline taxes, petroleum taxes associated with trucks, and diesel, and so forth—up to the highway trust fund and revolve and come back. We have tried to equitably distribute these funds, more so than in the 1991 ISTEA. The funding level in ISTEA II, which is the present bill, is \$145 billion. It is a 20-percent increase in funding over the 1991 ISTEA I.

This funding level, if I may say, is significantly higher than recommended by the administration in their proposal that came to the Congress. The United States has the largest transportation system in the world, with 170,000 miles of National Highway System routes, 900,000 miles of other Federal aid roads, and 3.7 million miles of other public roads. Our national network of highways carries 136 million cars, 58 million light trucks, 6.9 million freight trucks, and 686,000 buses. In 1995, cars and light trucks, mostly personal vehicles, were driven 2.2 trillion miles.

What is alarming to learn, however, is that nearly half of our major road system is in mediocre or fair condition. I will repeat that. Half of this vast communications system is in mediocre or fair condition. This lack of investment clearly jeopardizes safety, the individual personal safety of those on the highways, and the mobility of the trav-

eling public, as well as our economic competitiveness.

Now, I don't presume to give the causes for this problem in the market today, but anybody who wishes to be informed can certainly listen carefully, as I have done in the last 24 hours, to others who presumably have a better knowledge. But this problem is precipitated less by the U.S. economy, if at all—because that economy is relatively healthy—but more by the world marketplace, and primarily in Asia. It is a one-world competitive market, and the ability of this Nation to compete in that market is very, very significantly dependent on the efficiencies, the safety of this infrastructure of highways and roads and bridges. Mr. President, again, it is the competition in the world financial markets, primarily the deterioration of the situation in Asia that is causing the precipitous decline in our markets. I subscribe that that same competition exists in every other walk of life relative to the ability of the American working men and women to compete with their hands and their minds with others throughout the world. It is a one-world market.

I remember so well visiting, in Luray, VA, a plant that manufactures blue jeans. Now, blue jeans are almost a language in the world over today in many respects. I saw Virginians down over their machines sewing the particular garments being made that day.

I turned to the plant manager, who was escorting me through and I said, "How can we compete with the blue jeans manufacturers elsewhere in the world?" It was very interesting. I said, "We are complying with all the environmental requirements, with the wage laws, the workers are well paid, well cared for, with health programs; how can we compete with those plants that are operating while we are sleeping in the Asian market?"

He said, "Come with me."

We walked down and I saw a bank of computers that take the orders in, relay the orders to the workbench, products are manufactured, put on a conveyor belt, and then he beckoned me and we went outside. There were a half-dozen semi-trailers being loaded, box after box. He said to me very simply, "That order came in this morning, that garment was manufactured to the specifications of the merchant that placed that order, and the finished product is put in that truck and that truck travels overnight and that pair of jeans is on the store shelf the following morning."

Asia cannot compete because of the infrastructure of transportation, the ability of this plant and other plants all over America to, within 24 hours, turn around an order and have that product on the shelf.

That is what is at stake, the ability to turn around these products in the face of a deteriorating infrastructure all across this country.

Mediocre and fair condition. That is half of the Nation's road system. That

extrapolates into jobs, millions and millions of men and women of the United States ready to go to work provided in this bill and provide the needed stability that we are lacking today in view of these tragic declines in the world markets.

Transportation provides the link between business, industries, and consumers. Transportation and related industries employ 9.9 million people in the United States, slightly more than 7 percent of the total work force in this Nation. According to the Department of Transportation, for every \$1 billion invested in highway and bridge projects, over 42,000 new jobs are created. As one of the largest sectors of our economy, transportation represents nearly 11 percent of the gross domestic product. It is just behind the basic services of housing, health care, and food.

Another compelling statistic confirms that transportation remains a sound investment for the American taxpayers. For every dollar spent, there is an economic return of \$2.60.

Mr. President, I therefore urge my colleagues to consider these facts and let us not bring upon this institution that old adage that while Rome burned, Nero fiddled. We have to come to grips with this procedural question on campaign finance reform, but this type of legislation must go forward to provide the economic stability that is necessary at this very hour in America.

So I close, Mr. President, by urging all Senators who will be coming to the floor very shortly to express their views to perhaps take a look at what is happening in the international financial markets. It is impacting this country. Take a look at what is happening because while campaign finance is an important issue, it could really be perceived in the workplace by those who carry the lunch buckets, those who bend and sweat and toil to build America's roads and bridges, as the ant that toppled the mountain of jobs that are involved in this bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BINGAMAN. 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. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTING

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes this morning to debunk a few myths that are being spread about how the Senate voluntary national testing plan would

work and explain why a so-called compromise that has been discussed here in the Capitol in the last few days misses the mark almost entirely.

As many of my colleagues here in the Senate already know, the opponents of a voluntary national test are blocking what in my view is a reasonable and carefully crafted proposal to improve our schools. Over a month ago here in the Senate, we voted 87 to 13 in support of this proposal. Since then, the opponents of it have refused to even sit down at the table and talk about the issue. In fact, they have threatened to shut down the Federal Government again rather than to allow States and school districts and parents to decide for themselves whether or not they want to use these new tests.

In recent weeks, the opponents of voluntary national testing have tried to spread a series of myths about the proposal that was passed by the Senate. Many of these are described on the chart here. Let me just go through a few of them.

First of all, one of the myths is that this is "just another test." In reality, these national tests would provide essential information to parents that none of the commercial tests presently available provide, by allowing a comparison. The tests that are being considered by us in this legislation would allow a comparison between students across the Nation as to their level of performance on reading in the fourth grade and mathematics at the eighth grade.

Another myth is that the tests are not voluntary. The claim is that they are not voluntary. In fact, we have written into the language of the bill a specific requirement that they be voluntary; a prohibition against any impediment or any force being put on a State or district or community that chooses not to use the tests.

Another of the myths is that they would not do anything, when in reality we have various States and communities and school districts around the Nation that are showing that high standards and uniform measures of achievement can engage and empower area communities to put more emphasis on their schools and increase the learning that occurs there.

But, despite the mischaracterizations of the voluntary testing proposal, I am glad to report that educators and business leaders and the American public support this proposal overwhelmingly, the proposal that the President sent forward. I know this from having heard it from people on the front lines.

This last Friday we had a meeting with various people. An elementary school parent and PTA member, Laura Scott, told about how important independent tests were for parents who are handing their children over to schools and need all the leverage they can get to make sure the education their children are getting in those schools is adequate. Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado spoke about the efforts that are being

made in Colorado to develop their tests in these various subjects and how he would appreciate a chance to know how his State is doing relative to other States. He could not see any justification for each of the 50 States having to reinvent the wheel. Obviously, the President's proposal would eliminate the need for that. The Governor of North Carolina, Jim Hunt, also spoke eloquently about the importance of having benchmarks so that he can determine the appropriateness of the education that is being provided to his own grandchildren in the public schools of North Carolina.

From a business perspective, Alan Wurtzel, of the National Alliance of Business, and Chris Larson, of the Technology Network, described how important uniform measures of achievement are to preparing a qualified work force for the 21st century and how the business community insists upon objective measurements of achievement in the training that they do. And they believe that same concept makes a lot of sense in our schools as well.

Representing large, urban school districts, Philadelphia School Superintendent David Hornbeck said that the tests, as he saw it, would be, and the phrase he used was a "sword of equality" for poor and minority students in Philadelphia and elsewhere who today are receiving an inferior education, unfortunately, in many of these school systems but, by virtue of this kind of objective performance testing, would be able to improve the situation.

Most recently, opponents of the voluntary national tests came up with the so-called compromise proposal that in my view reveals a basic misunderstanding about what the voluntary national testing proposal is supposed to do. The proposed compromise preserves the status quo. It relies on a type of test—the type which many of our school districts are now using—which creates the impression that students are doing better than they really are. We could refer to this proposal as the Lake Wobegone proposal. It is clearly a situation, which we have today, where "all the children are above average."

First off, the compromise they are proposing is not much different from an outright prohibition on the development of any new tests. Further development of a voluntary national test would be immediately and completely prohibited under this compromise, so-called compromise, that has been discussed. That is nothing else but protecting the status quo, in denying States, denying school districts the choice to participate in a national measure of student achievement. Seven States have already indicated they want to participate and 15 major school districts have opted to do so.

Second, this proposed compromise wouldn't really accomplish anything useful in terms of focusing more attention on world-class standards for all

children. That is because instead of developing new national tests on fourth grade reading and eighth grade math, this antitesting proposal would fund a \$3 million study of the feasibility of linking various commercial tests that are already there with each other. These commercial tests that would be linked under this study do not conform to the rigorous academic standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The whole idea behind this development of a fourth grade reading test and eighth grade math test is we want these kinds of rigorous national academic standards that are reflected in the National Assessment of Educational Progress available for all schools to look at.

In addition, the tests that would be studied are all "norm-referenced" tests, which means their scores are all reported by percentiles. They show how you scored compared to others, but they do not show how you score relative to any kind of objective criteria, as to whether or not you can read at a reasonable level or do math at a reasonable level.

In many ways, this proposal misses the point. It suggests that the current hodgepodge of commercial tests can adequately solve the problem. It proposes to preserve the status quo rather than allowing States and districts to make their own choices. It undercuts the National Assessment for Educational Progress which is the most rigorous national measure of student achievement. And this so-called compromise is completely unsatisfactory in that it would block the proposal we agreed to here in the Senate, to allow this test to be developed by the National Assessment Governing Board.

Here in the Senate, the compromise that was negotiated, it was clear, was supported overwhelmingly by a bipartisan group of Senators. Leading scholars in this field such as Checker Finn and Bill Bennett supported that compromise. Since then, 43 Senators have pledged to block the appropriations bill or to uphold a veto, if the President is required to veto the bill, if that original compromise is not maintained.

So, if testing opponents want the National Academy of Sciences to study whether commercial or even State-developed tests are as rigorous as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, I have no problem with that. I think studies can sometimes be useful. But until it is clear that State and commercial tests are up to the task, I believe we should be able to go ahead with the voluntary national test development and that funding should be kept in the bill and not be prohibited as the House is considering doing.

Mr. President, I know there are others waiting to speak. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. 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. GRAMS. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent I be able to speak as in morning business.

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

THE INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT OF 1997

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I am here this morning on the floor to talk about the very important ISTEA legislation that is being held up in the Senate here for many, many different reasons. But the introduction of the Senate's Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1997 represents the results of intense negotiations between Chairman CHAFEE, Senator WARNER, and Senator BAUCUS, each of whom have represented three different legislative approaches to the reauthorization of ISTEA.

I thank each of these Senators for the work they have done to bring this bill to the floor because the citizens of my home State of Minnesota strongly support a 6-year reauthorization bill, funded at the highest levels. This should be one of our top priorities before we adjourn this session. Unfortunately, however, this very important piece of legislation is being held up by other Senators seeking to impose a political agenda on a very vital transportation spending issue. Again, it is being held up by Senators who want to impose a political agenda on vital transportation spending.

Their effort to halt this crucial transportation spending bill are far more egregious than other attempts in the past to influence legislation by holding it hostage. It is inconceivable to me that we would not consider this bill on its own merits. The question of why not is being asked by every State concerned about the availability of transportation funds for continuing projects. It is ironic that Senators claiming to support labor issues would now thumb their noses at the same hard-working Americans who feed and clothe their families through the salaries they earn working on transportation projects, not to mention how important those projects are for improved safety and for meeting our growing transportation needs.

ISTEA must be considered before we adjourn for the year. There has been a real effort to reach a compromise that achieves balance among the 50 States. This balance is required to address unique transportation needs in the different regions of our country: The congestion needs of the growing South, the aging infrastructure needs of the Northeast, as well as the national transportation needs of the rural West and the Midwest. Almost every State shares in the growth in dollars con-

tained in the bill compared with the funding levels that they received under ISTEA back in 1991.

I was proud to join Senator WARNER as a cosponsor of STEP 21 earlier this year, as Minnesota was a member of the STEP 21 coalition, and I am pleased that much of the bill has been incorporated now into this piece of legislation.

Mr. President, this bill attempts to preserve the principles of ISTEA that have proven to be successful. We need to ensure that our transportation growth contributes to the preservation of our environment.

We need to continue to build upon the shared decisionmaking among the Federal, State, and local governments in the transportation planning process. We also need a transportation bill that is based on a formula that is fair. This bill will either succeed on the doctrine of fairness or it will fall victim to politics as it has in the past.

I am pleased the ISTEA reauthorization attempts to ensure a fair allocation of funds. The new formula was determined with objective factors, such as the number of miles of the National Highway System and each State's contributions to the highway trust fund.

Under this legislation, every State will receive a minimum return of 90 percent of their contributions to the highway trust fund. That is a very different guarantee from the so-called 90-percent minimum allocation in ISTEA. This is a real guarantee.

Finally, we must have a transportation bill that makes an improvement in streamlining as well as flexibility. This bill streamlines ISTEA's five major programs down into three, and they are the National Highway System, the Surface Transportation Program, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program.

The Federal focus on our most important network of roads, the National Highway System, which includes our interstate system, is maintained. The streamlining and the flexibility provided by the ISTEA reauthorization will give Minnesota the ability to make its own transportation decisions, and that is a great step forward. Other States also would have the same freedom.

This bill attempts to get a reasonable rate of return for Minnesota. In this bill, my State will receive 1.50 percent of Federal apportionment dollars, which represents an increase from the 1.43 percent of actual dollars under the 1991 ISTEA.

The bill would also increase my State's share by over \$82 million per average year above the 1991 authorization level.

I am also pleased to be a cosponsor of the Byrd-Gramm amendment which allows the Federal gas tax of 4.3 cents now dedicated to the highway trust fund to actually be spent on highways. This will provide Minnesota the necessary additional revenue that is so critical to meeting our infrastructure needs.

Mr. President, the political games must end. The reauthorization of ISTEA has expired. We need to go forward and we need to approve a new highway reauthorization bill.

It has been proven again and again that transportation spending is one of the most important, it is one of the most cost-effective investments in our Nation's future. For every \$1 billion spent on transportation, we create 60,000 jobs, jobs that are now at risk again while some Senators attempt to hold this legislation prisoner in exchange for the advancement of their particular political agendas. I ask my colleagues this morning to help liberate this political hostage to allow the ISTEA legislation to proceed.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor, and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you, Mr. President.

REVENUE SHARING OF OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF FEDERAL RECEIPTS FROM OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to the attention of the Senate and, hopefully, to the Nation, a concern that is very important to my constituents in the State of Louisiana and to other coastal States. I rise to address this issue in order to begin what I hope will be an educational process for all of us.

As you know, the Federal Government, through the Minerals Management Service and the Bureau of Land Management at the Department of the Interior shares with the States 50 percent of the mineral revenues from Federal lands inside the boundary of States, to offset the impacts of onshore mineral development. Unlike the States that support onshore development of Federal mineral resources, Louisiana, particularly, and Texas, Alaska, California, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida receive comparatively little of the revenues received by the Federal Government for offshore oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf.

I intend very shortly to introduce legislation to realign the OCS revenues to reflect a more fair and more just allocation. This legislation will also address historical and anticipated impacts on infrastructure and environmental needs that have been identified over the course of time. I raise this issue as the Senate today, Mr. President, will be voting on the Interior and related agencies appropriations conference report this afternoon. That bill