

to do that. I hope in the next few days we can work on some of the issues that we believe are so important, which we have talked about on many occasions, such as minimum wage, Patients' Bill of Rights, prescription drugs, and education. We understand where we are in a parliamentary situation now that we can't offer any amendments. We look forward to the next week being very productive and our being able to move forward on some of this very important legislation.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, in response, I believe the Senate has voted one or more times on all of the issues that Senator REID mentioned. It is my full expectation that before this session is over a minimum wage bill, coupled with a small business tax relief package that we will have to work through the final details on, will be incorporated in some other bill or moved in one way or another and sent to the President. I fully expect that it will be accomplished.

I think maybe the Senator knows there is a Patients' Bill of Rights conference that is still meeting. I think there are meetings, even today, to see if we can come to an agreement to get a bill that truly protects patients, but not just become a bill that provides more opportunities for my brother-in-law to sue people. So I am hopeful on a combination there. In fact, I discussed that with the President directly and said we would still like to see if we couldn't have some sort of a sit-down meeting and a broad, bipartisan, bicameral, "bi-branch" of the Government discussion and get an end result. I am still hopeful that can occur.

On education, obviously, when we get to the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations conference report, it is going to have funds for education in it—more funds than was requested by the administration or was in our budget resolution. We will have to come to some agreement about how we help local school districts in terms of flexibility, accountability, school construction, and if the best way to be helpful is a bond or some other program. All of that is under discussion now, and it is occurring between the House and Senate and the administration.

So certainly I understand that there is a desire to perhaps offer other amendments. I am sure the Senator can understand my feeling that we have already voted on all of those issues, and repeated votes don't necessarily render a result. I think what we need to do in this final period of the session is get agreements and work together.

I had a meeting with Senator DASCHLE. We talked about a bill that has broad bipartisan support—actually, a couple of bills. We looked at whether we can consider them on the floor, or if there is another way we can get a result that would be satisfactory to the largest number of Senators without having an extended cloture process, such as we had on H-1B.

I have indicated I would like for us to see if we can find a way to do the railroad retirement bill. But if I bring that up, it probably would have to go through a lot of hurdles, and there is opposition to some aspects of it. Instead of trying to find a way to have a fight, I am trying to find a way to get an agreement and get it done.

I certainly understand Senator REID's position. He has been persistent in that effort, and he has done it without rancor. I appreciate that. As we go into these final few days of the session, hopefully we can keep the channels of communication open and see what we can do to facilitate a conclusion with which most Senators can be satisfied.

Mr. REID. Finally, the majority leader raised the minimum wage issue. I believe we can do something on a bipartisan basis. The three Senators on the floor presently—two Democrats and one Republican—know that one of the tax incentives we have to give small business is a meals tax deduction. We cut that back significantly and it has hurt restaurant businesses all over America. For Mississippi, having a heavy resort industry, along with Atlantic City and Nevada, I think that is something we can do on a bipartisan basis.

I hope we can get the minimum wage issue before us and have decent tax breaks that aren't budget busters and move forward on that.

On the Patients' Bill of Rights, for example, sadly, the structure of the Senate has changed by one. We believe we are entitled to another vote, and that failed by one vote previously. That is an issue we can debate later in some other forum. We have talked enough today on H-1B and matters related thereto. I can say that I am comforted by the fact that we were able to get an early vote on the motion to suspend the rules. I hope that will satisfy everybody because it was an up-or-down vote on the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act.

I hope we can set that matter aside and schedule an early vote on H-1B.

Mr. LOTT. I would be glad to work with Senator REID and our colleagues to see if we can find a time to do that tomorrow. I ask our staff to see if we can work through that agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I understand that I have 15 minutes based on the unanimous consent agreement that we just concluded.

#### TRANSPORTATION

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I am getting very close to the end of my Senate career. One of the issues I consider vital in terms of my knowledge and experience in the Senate for these last 18 years is that I have learned, among several other serious problems, of a problem that looms large and is often ignored. That is, how do we es-

tablish our transportation system to satisfy the growing needs for travel in this country?

I see a crisis looming in our country because of congestion and because of our inability to move in a timely and reasonably comfortable fashion. We constantly read about delays at airports. As a matter of fact, these days I can almost never travel by air without resigning myself to the fact that I am not going to get there on time. There is a very good chance that I am going to miss my connection. There is a very good chance that a flight may be canceled. There is a very good chance that it is going to be a stressful, tough trip.

I was fortunate enough to be a grandparent for the eighth time. My son lives in Colorado. I am, as everyone knows, I hope, from New Jersey. My son and his wife just had their first child, my number eight grandchild. The oldest is six years old. They are little kids. They are an awful lot of fun. I would like to see more of them if I could do it and still make sure I perform the duties necessary to represent the people of New Jersey and the people of this country.

The trip I made consisted of two legs: one to Denver, CO, and the next one a short trip outside of Denver. It was on a Saturday. It wasn't on a busy weekday. It left an hour late from Newark. We were told that we should plan on a refueling stop in Wichita, KS. I have nothing against Kansas. I just didn't want to stop there if I didn't have to, because I was in such a hurry to get out and see my newest granddaughter. Her name is Hannah Lautenberg. I wanted to see her in the worst way. We stopped in Wichita long enough, about 40 minutes, to add more fuel.

Why did we leave the Newark airport to start on a trip knowing full well that we weren't going to have enough fuel to make the trip? They said, based on the passenger load, the baggage load, and the severe headwinds that we were going to run into, we had to provide for circling over Denver Airport in case that was necessary. We managed to take on the fuel. We didn't have to circle over Denver. The weather was reasonable. But it was enough for me to miss my next flight.

I called ahead and tried to reserve the second flight 2 hours later and was told that it was canceled and that the one 2 hours after that was full. Normally I would have exploded. But nobody would have cared. The worst thing is that you kind of resign yourself to saying, "Oh, well, that is what I expected." Instead of getting a 30-minute airplane ride, I took a 2½ hour van ride bouncing along the pavement and trying to figure out what to do to keep myself amused during that period of time. It was hard to read.

I got to see that beautiful grandchild. Boy, was I happy, too. She was as glorious as my daughter-in-law and my son described her. I thought she looked a lot like me. They said no. But it was a pleasant experience.

I stayed overnight and planned to take a 1:30 flight out because I had only come in 5 o'clock the night before to Denver, CO from New Jersey. But I was told that the short flight was canceled and that I have to go back in the van. I have nothing against the van, the company, or the driver. It was just a lot of time to spend together with a stranger. That is what I did.

I got back having missed two legs of the flight for which I paid in advance. I am not blaming that particular airline.

It is terrible what we have adjusted to. We have adjusted to poor performance. We have adjusted to discomfort. We have adjusted to not having services that we paid for. That is the kind of society we created.

I have all kind of friends. I come out of the corporate world, as the distinguished occupant of the Chair knows, and am accustomed to business travel. In the days before I came to the Senate, you would have a reservation and arrive kind of at the last minute, get on the plane, arrive on time, do your business, and get on your way. It is not so anymore at all.

Again, it is not simply because the airlines are neglectful or that the airlines aren't trying. They simply can't carry the load.

We have to face up to it. If you have bad weather in Denver, CO, you can bet your boots that you will be held up by aviation travel throughout the country. If you have bad weather, as we do even in Washington, DC, where sometimes they say the weather is always sunny—it is hard to believe that—you get stuck, and you feel it all over the country.

We had a meeting at the Newark airport. I sat down with people from the FAA, the Secretary of Transportation, people from the controllers operation, people who manage the airports, and people from the Air Transport Committee who operate the airlines.

I asked one question: Is the sky a finite place or can we say it is infinite and just put every airplane that you can get in the sky up there without feeling the impact? I don't think they were surprised. I was. The answer was no. It is crowded up there.

I went to a place in central southern New Jersey just about two-thirds of the way down where a couple of weeks ago we had an airplane crash. Two airplanes with a total of 11 people collided in the sky on a bright, sunny day. All 11 people died. It was a miracle that more people on the ground were not killed. I don't want to get too grizzly. But part of the airplane fell through a house roof with people in it. It was a stark reminder about how this system is overloaded.

I fly a lot in the second seat in the airplane, listen to the radio, and do some of the observing that one has to do in an airplane cockpit.

I hear over the collision warning system "traffic," "traffic," "traffic." That means that there are airplanes

close enough to you that you had better be careful.

I point these out because we have our heads in the sand. We are not facing up to the problem. There is no more room in the sky.

I can tell you this: There are no communities that I have seen begging for more airplanes to come into their airports. I have not seen anybody that says, let's not build more highways. I don't care if the cars pass underneath my window making noise all night. I don't care if my kids read that excessive carbon monoxide and other emissions come out of automobiles and diesel trucks. I don't know of anybody saying that. They are saying, help us get around more effectively. There is one way to do that, Mr. President; that is, get this country into the 21st century transportation mode.

Not too long ago, I was on a trip to NATO and went from Brussels, Belgium, to Paris, France, a distance of 200 miles in about an hour and 25 minutes. We are 250 miles from New York. Sometimes I make it in a cool 4 hours by air, because I have to get on the plane. One time they told me: Get on the plane, Senator. I want you to know that we are moving away from the gate but we are going to wait 3 hours because of the line-up of traffic before we can take off. But we have to pull away from the gate. So please make the adjustment.

In 1987 I had the good fortune to understand the problem and wrote the law that banned smoking in airplanes. It happened right here. It was a tough fight, but we got it through. I thought, my goodness, suppose we had to sit in an airplane 3 hours before we took off today with the people who are accustomed to smoking in airplanes saying to the pilot while banging on the door: Let us smoke. It would have been awful, and people across the country would have been in rebellion if they had to do that. So there is a solution: Get on with an investment in high-speed rail.

I have heard debate on this floor that distresses me, from intelligent people, from people who say: No, we don't want to spend any more on Amtrak, we have spent enough. This is a cash guzzler.

The fact of the matter is, we haven't done the job that we planned or that we thought we should have. We have spent \$23 billion, approximately, since Amtrak—as we know it now—was developed in the early 1970s. It sounds like a lot of money, but it isn't a lot of money, not when we consider what we put into aviation, what we put into airports over the same period of time. I repeat, \$23 billion since 1971.

Since that period of time, we have spent \$160 billion on aviation programs, \$380 billion on highways. Yes, we do collect a highway tax, and I am not saying we haven't done a pretty good job in building highways and airports. I am glad to see things being updated and upgraded. The fact of the matter is, when it is compared to \$23 billion in

Federal subsidies for high-speed rail, it is a drop in the bucket. Germany is going to spend \$70 billion in a decade upgrading its high-speed rail system. We ought to learn from that.

To say just because a State doesn't have active rail service they don't want it to happen is crazy. Everybody doesn't have the same kind of aviation airline service we have in Chicago or New York or Los Angeles or Dallas, TX. But we help the system perform. We pay funds into FAA and build control towers and build a flight service network. Why? Because it is good for the country. And so is high-speed rail, even if it doesn't touch your neighborhood.

As a matter of fact, we have a bunch of locations that are going to be beneficiaries of high-speed rail. They are included in 14 of the most congested urban areas that are designated high-speed corridors, including Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, Atlanta, GA, Houston, TX, Washington, DC, and Portland, OR, just to name a few of the places that are going to benefit by investments in high-speed rail. However, we have a problem convincing people from those States that it is good for them, that we ought to be spending more money on getting this system up to snuff.

I proposed a piece of legislation that calls for \$10 billion worth of capital investment by Amtrak over the next 10 years to try to bring the system up to grade for the 21st century. That is on top of other subsidies for which we appropriate funds. It gives them the ability to sell \$10 billion worth of bonds. The Federal Government does have to take some cost for providing a tax credit for bondholders.

The benefits are enormous. Within 2 weeks, we will see the first high-speed rail train set come into Washington. It will be there just as a showpiece to tell us what is coming. Very soon thereafter, within 4 or 5 weeks, we will be seeing high-speed rail service or modified high-speed rail service in this corridor, between Washington and New York. We started in New York, the New York to Boston route. It is not truly high-speed rail; it is modified high-speed. It took an hour and a half off a 5½-hour trip, and the trains are loaded. It is as if people were standing on the platform for weeks waiting to find a train ride that would get them to their destinations, depending on weather, overcrowded skies, congestion all over the place, getting in your car and sitting there with all of the toxic emissions, all of the pollution, waiting for the traffic to move along. It was indeed a blessing, recognized by the public.

When we get the system in the New York to Washington area, it will be considerably less than a 3-hour trip. That competes very effectively with aviation and the shuttle flights. We have approximately 100 flights a day. I don't want to deprive the airlines of revenue. That is not my mission. My mission is to help the American public

get to their destinations on time, not miss connections, and to feel more comfortable, and lift the spirit of people who have to travel for a living, or recreationally, for family reunions or all kinds of reasons—to make it easier. That is the mission we are on.

We have endorsements from many organizations. I know the occupant of the Chair was a member of the National Governors' Association when he was the Governor of Ohio. They endorse high-speed speed rail. National Conference of State Legislatures; U.S. Conference of Mayors; we have environmentalists; the American Road and Transportation Association; the AFL-CIO, Rail Labor Division; all people who have an interest in seeing high-speed rail. And newspapers that think about these things and whether or not they are going to be affected by this: The New York Times, the Houston Chronicle, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Tampa

Tribune, Minneapolis Star Tribune, and other newspapers support this investment in high speed rail.

I think we ought to get on with it. I plead with my colleagues, don't let this be a last-ditch stand to try to uproot the possibilities of getting these trains underway, getting this track underway, getting the signal systems underway. It will make a difference in lives all across this country. Some of those whose States are serviced or will be serviced by this high-speed rail connection have to recognize what it means to them directly and step up to the plate and say this will be a national asset, even if it doesn't touch any of the cities in my State.

Recognizing time is precious and not wanting to hold the present occupant of the chair to a stricter schedule than he would like, I am feeling very generous and sympathetic because I know I am going to be able to call on the occupant of the chair to help us with the

high-speed rail situation. I thank the chair for the courtesy of permitting me to make these comments. This is a milestone for America. It is a very important point in how we see ourselves getting from here to there.

I hope my colleagues will support this with enthusiasm, knowing very well this is going to be the mode of transportation that is essential to continue to carry out our responsibilities.

I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

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RECESS UNTIL 9:30 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, September 28, 2000.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:19 p.m., recessed until Thursday, September 28, 2000, at 9:30 a.m.