

industry, and away from the government, to ensure adequate funding of the system.

Better financing means enhanced returns to provide for an improved benefit structure for Railroad Retirement beneficiaries.

These benefits would include a lowering of the incredibly high payroll taxes currently paid by railroad workers and employers; a lowering of the retirement age for those with 30 years of service to age 60; reducing the vesting period in the system from 10 years to 5; and improving the benefits paid to widows and widowers.

All of these improved benefits are desirable reforms, and they can be achieved without compromising the solvency of the system, which the Railroad Retirement Board's actuary has projected out to 75 years under this legislation.

Because this legislation is the right solution at the right time, it has received overwhelming bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress.

Last year, when the bill was first introduced, it was approved on the floor of the House by a vote of 391-25, and had the support of 80 Members in the Senate. However, after it was reported favorably by the Finance Committee, it never made it to the Senate floor.

After its reintroduction in the current Congress, the bill has again been approved by a landslide on the floor of the House, and now awaits action here in the Senate, where it has enjoyed the support of 74 cosponsors.

I urge your continued support of this legislation, and speedy passage of the reform that railroad workers and their families throughout this country so badly deserve.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 10 minutes.

THE SENATE AGENDA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are hopefully working down to the end of this session. We have completed most of those things that we need to do. We need now to focus on those remaining items that I think are imperative for us to complete. Obviously, there are lots of things that could be done. The fact is, we have spent an extraordinary amount of money. We are going to exceed our budget with the budget activities and, of course, about \$50 billion in addition to that. I agree that it should indeed be spent for those things. We

are in an emergency situation with the terrorists. We are in an emergency situation with the economy.

The two things I believe we have to do are, No. 1, finish our appropriations. We are moving along. The House passed one of the most difficult bills yesterday. We will now undertake to do Defense appropriations. There are about four more with which we need to deal.

Then we need to finish a stimulus package. The President has called upon the Senate to pass a responsible economic stimulus bill.

It is difficult to identify what will have a short-term impact on the economy. Our economy is much lower than we would like. Indeed, as has been said, we are in a recession. But we need to do something that will have some impact.

The President has suggested a package that would extend unemployment benefits for 13 weeks for Americans who lost their jobs as a result of the terrorist attacks; making \$11 billion available to low-income people to obtain health insurance in a manner such that the system would not become mandatory in the future; \$3 billion in special energy emergency grants to help displaced workers. That has to do with health care coverage.

Then, of course, the other portion has to do with helping create jobs, which, after all, is really the result we would like. We would like to help people without jobs. Most importantly, we provide encouragement to companies and corporations by accelerating depreciation so they will invest in new material; partial expensing to encourage the purchasing of new equipment; and also have payments for low-income workers and get the money in their hands so we can see increased purchasing.

Those are things on which I hope we focus. I know we are talking about agriculture. We are talking about railroad retirement. They need to be completed. But there is a question of whether they need to be completed now with this emergency. We really need to evaluate the money. We have already made available \$12 billion in new spending for many of the things we talked about. The President and the administration determine where it will go.

I am hopeful that we can focus in the relatively short time we have left. I am pleased that we seem to be making progress in terms of the economic stimulus. The bill that came out of the committee was not a bipartisan bill. We did not work on it from both sides. Now we have a House bill that is somewhat different. We have a Democratic bill that is somewhat different. The President's bill is somewhat different. Of course, we need to find a reasonable agreement among those groups to come up with something that works. I certainly encourage that we do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order for me to make my remarks while seated at my desk.

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

Mr. HELMS. I thank the Chair.

THE NORTH SHORE ROAD MUST BE COMPLETED

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, for some time I have felt inclined to discuss in the Senate a matter for the RECORD and of importance to the people living in the far western counties of North Carolina and in the beautiful mountains adjacent to the Tennessee border.

The matter involved is the federal government's finally fulfilling after a fashion a commitment made in 1943 in writing by the U.S. Government to the citizens of Swain County. The federal government proposed to build a road along the north shore of Fontana Lake which was created in World War II to provide power to the TVA. This written commitment was made to citizens who voluntarily gave up their homes to support the U.S.'s World War II defense efforts.

The federal government has not yet fulfilled its commitment, and that has caused a great deal of resentment and mistrust of the government among the citizens of Swain County and other surrounding counties on the North Carolina side of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

These citizens understandably believe that the federal government should now live up to its written commitment made during World War II because these people gave up their homes in order that Fontana Lake could be built so that power could be generated by TVA.

But, there has been a curious development. A small group of citizens in Swain County now proposes to ask that the federal government buy them out, thereby voiding that federal government commitment made in 1943. They presented the proposal that they be bought out to the Swain County Commissioners, and, praise the Lord, the commissioners rejected this suggestion.

So as a result of the \$16 million appropriation in the fiscal year 2001 Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, this project has at long last begun to move. The National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration have restarted this process to complete that road as promised, in writing, in 1943 to the citizens of Swain County and western North Carolina.

Mr. President, I have a letter in hand, along with the text of the resolution adopted by the Swain County Commissioners which expresses their thanks for the \$16 million that provided for continued road construction and improvements that were included in the fiscal year 2001 Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

The commissioners of Swain County want that road completed. The people of Swain County want that road completed.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the aforementioned letter and resolution be printed in the RECORD, following which I shall resume my remarks.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NOVEMBER 9, 2001.

JESSE HELMS,
Dirksen Senate Building,
Washington, DC.

SENATOR JESSE HELMS: I again take this opportunity to thank you for the continued support you have showed for projects in Swain County.

Attached is a statement, which you should have received earlier, thanking you for the work you have done on behalf of Swain County and the North Shore Road.

Sincerely Yours,

JIM DOUTHIT,

Chairman, Swain County Commissioners.

SWAIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STATEMENT REGARDING THE APPROPRIATION OF
\$16M FOR CONSTRUCTION OF AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE NORTH SHORE ROAD

The Swain County Board of Commissioners would like to thank Senator Jesse Helms, Congressman Charles Taylor, and President Bill Clinton for making available from the Highway Trust Fund for Swain County 16 million dollars for construction of and improvements to the North Shore Road in Swain County North Carolina.

With the completion of this road, the federal government will have fulfilled their contract with Swain County known as the 1943 Agreement, then trust can be restored between Swain County and the federal government. We feel this appropriation will go a long way in helping Swain County.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, roads in national parks are vital pieces of economic infrastructure that fuel the engines of economic growth. In fact, the National Park Service itself recognizes as much on its Web site. Let me quote: "Recreation travel accounts for 20 percent of travel in the United States. Park roads are a vital part of America's transportation network, providing economic opportunity and growth in rural regions of the country. In addition to the park access, motor tourism has created viable gateway communities en route. In some areas entire economies are based on park road access. Examples include communities near Yellowstone, Glacier, and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, and the Blue Ridge Parkway."

Why on Earth, then, are these economic benefits denied to the people living in the counties on the North Carolina side of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park? I will tell you why. The Department of the Interior and the National Park Service have been held hostage by self-proclaimed environmentalists and their sympathizers in the Interior Department who are horrified, obviously, by their pretended apprehension that environmental Armageddon will somehow result from the construction of a simple

"two-lane dustless road," as specifically called for in the 1943 agreement, signed by the Federal Government.

Mind you, this would be a Blue Ridge Parkway-type road allowing for greater access on the North Carolina side of the park just as long ago occurred on the State of Tennessee side a few miles west.

Additionally, according to the National Park Service statistics, there are 5,000 miles of paved roads and 3,000 miles of unpaved roads in the National Park System of this country. My question is, can anybody seriously suggest that 30 more miles will cause an environmental Armageddon? The thought is laughable. Of course not. But that is the ringing cry of these professional environmentalists.

In fact, the Federal Government began building the road back in 1963, and did build 2½ miles of it. In 1965, they built another 2.1 miles. Then in 1969, they built an additional mile, plus a 1,200-foot-long tunnel.

That was when, Mr. President, the self-appointed environmentalists created an uproar and forbade the Federal Government from going further, which has caused, by the way, economic problems for the four North Carolina counties surrounding the park that I am talking about.

Road engineering has improved enormously since that most recent section was built in 1969. Many more improved methods are now available to address the concerns thrown up by these self-appointed environmental opponents of progress.

Let me make it clear, I have no problem with our Tennessee neighbors who are ably represented by Senators FRIST and THOMPSON, but I am obliged, as a Senator from North Carolina, to emphasize some meaningful and relevant statistics of the National Park Service.

In the 2000 report, which has the most recent statistics available, the Park Service stated that 4,477,357 visitors came to the North Carolina side of the park, while 5,698,455 visitors came to the Tennessee side of the park. Of course, for anybody who wants to figure it out, it is a difference of 1,221,098 visitors.

Additionally, according to the latest available retail sales per capita figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, the four Tennessee counties surrounding the park have averaged \$9,431.25, but the average for the four North Carolina counties that need that road for more tourists to come there have averaged \$7,964.00, a difference of \$1,467.25, if you want to get down to the penny.

The North Carolina State average is \$9,740.00 per capita, and the Tennessee State average is \$9,448.00 per capita. The four Tennessee counties surrounding the park averaged just \$16.75 under the Tennessee State average. The four North Carolina counties, on the other hand—the four counties of which we are talking about in terms of building this road along the north shore of Fontana Lake—come in

\$1,776.00 under the North Carolina average.

Now then, these figures are among countless indications of the inequities between the North Carolina side and the Tennessee side of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Let me assure the Administration of this: I have met with the distinguished Director of the National Park Service, Fran Mianella and she is a very pleasant lady—to let her know that this is a significant issue with citizens of western North Carolina who have been neglected.

I am hopeful she and Secretary Norton will give this matter their highest priorities and will continue to move this project well away from those who have for too long been holding it hostage.

I will continue my opposition to a Federal buyout of the Federal Government's commitment in 1943 to the citizens of Swain County and western North Carolina. I commend the commissioners of Swain County for standing flatfooted against it as well.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

I 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. DORGAN. 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. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

GINA'S LAW

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have today written a letter to the Attorney General and to the head of the Office of Management and Budget expressing my great concern over regulations that should now have been in place as a result of a law that was signed by the President last December. That law would have required regulations to be published by the Justice Department in July. No such regulations have been published.

Here is the background of this issue. I, along with my colleague, then-Senator John Ashcroft, authored legislation that became law, when signed by the President, dealing with the transportation of violent criminals around this country. Private companies have been contracted by State and local governments to transport prisoners around America from one prison and one location to another.

These private companies were transporting violent criminals, and all too often those criminals were walking away. We decided the companies that were hauling violent offenders were not adhering to standards or regulations and there should be some regulations. The President signed a bill, authored by myself and then-Senator Ashcroft,