

We then asked Mr. Rutter, who is the head of the Federal Railroad Administration, what was the status of the Amtrak request for \$200 million. He alerted us that they were in the process of evaluating it, and he believed they would be able to get back to Amtrak with the answer early next week.

If you will do the math, you will understand we are talking about 24 to 48 hours separating the decision by the Bush administration on interim financing for Amtrak and the suspension of all Amtrak service across the United States.

I said to Mr. Gunn that I believed we had a moral obligation to notify Governors across the United States with Amtrak service of this looming transportation disaster. Let me say for many of us who believe in Amtrak and national passenger rail service that it is absolutely disgraceful that we have reached this point.

At some point, this administration should have stepped forward to work with Congress to make certain that Amtrak service was not in jeopardy. Now we face the very real possibility of a disastrous transportation situation as early as next week.

We heard this morning from Secretary of Transportation Norm Mineta, a speech he gave to the Chamber of Commerce about his vision of the future of Amtrak. It is a vision which is not new. It is the same vision that Margaret Thatcher had in England when she took a look at British rail service and decided to privatize it, to separate it, and to try to take a different route. It turned out to be a complete failure—not only a failure in the terms of the reliability of service but a failure in terms of safety.

The administration's proposal on Amtrak is a disaster waiting to happen. It is literally a train wreck when it comes to the future of national passenger rail service.

If you believe, as I do, that our Nation should seek energy security, that we should try to find modes of transportation to reduce pollution and traffic congestion, which is getting progressively worse and we can't ignore it, then we cannot and should not walk away from Amtrak.

This administration's position at this point is going to create a crisis in transportation. We need to maintain not only the very best highways and the safest airports in America, but we need national passenger rail service. We need leadership in the White House and at Amtrak with a vision of how to turn that rail service in the 21st century into something that we can point to with pride and effectiveness.

We don't have that today. Mr. Gunn has been drawn out of retirement and has been heading Amtrak for just a few weeks. This didn't occur on his watch. He is a competent administrator who wants the resources to make Amtrak work. Instead, what this administration has given him is a doomsday scenario where literally Amtrak service

could be terminated across America next week. What it means for the Northeast corridor is probably a dramatic change in terms of the way the families and businesses would have to operate. What it means in my home State of Illinois is that thousands of passengers and thousands of employees will have their future and their transportation in jeopardy. It didn't have to reach this point, but it has.

I sincerely hope my colleagues will join me in urging the Bush White House to respond tomorrow—not next week but tomorrow—favorably for financing of Amtrak so we can tell the Governors across America that this emergency is not going to happen.

I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2662 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed as in morning business for not to exceed 6 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I shall not object, of course, but I think there was a unanimous consent agreement previously that had me following the Senator from Maine with 10 minutes. If I might inquire about the timing here.

Is the Senator from Michigan going to speak after the Senator from Virginia?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am a cosponsor with the Senator from Maine on this legislation. I can reduce my time to 3 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Virginia be given 6 minutes, if this is all right with Senator DORGAN, and then Senator DORGAN be recognized to proceed as in morning business.

Mr. DORGAN. Yes, I think by previous unanimous consent.

Mr. LEVIN. For 10 minutes, as in morning business.

Mr. DORGAN. I certainly would not object to the Senator from Virginia being recognized if I am recognized as previously agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. I thank my good friend for his usual and customary senatorial courtesy.

(The remarks of Mr. WARNER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2662 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the two leaders are going to confer in a few minutes. How much longer is the order in effect to have morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty-five minutes.

Mr. REID. From this point?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

Mr. REID. That should be ample time. The two leaders should be back by then. The two managers of the bill will have an announcement at 20 till, 25 till.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I follow the Senator from North Dakota in morning business.

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

The Senator from North Dakota.

AMTRAK

Mr. DOGRAN. Mr. President, my colleague from Illinois, Senator DURBIN, a moment ago spoke of the dilemma now faced by Amtrak, the company that provides rail passenger service.

The Secretary of Transportation earlier today provided a glimpse into his and the administration's view of what to do about Amtrak. It is clearly devastating, if you believe that we ought to have rail passenger service.

I confess, I like trains. I grew up in a small town where a train called the Galloping Goose used to come through. We gathered to watch the train come through our little town. I like trains. This isn't about being nostalgic or liking trains. It is about whether you think our country should have rail passenger service. The testimony this morning by Mr. Gunn was that by mid next week, unless the financing is made available, Amtrak will shut down. By mid next week, we will have no rail passenger service because it will shut down, unless the Department of Transportation and the other relevant agencies get together on the financing package necessary.

It is important that we have rail passenger service. Aside from the urgent circumstances that face us next week, the other question is this: What will the long-term plan be for an Amtrak rail passenger system that works?

The Secretary of Transportation said today that this is his plan: Let's take the Northeast corridor and cut it off and sort of semiprivatize it and sell it—I am not quite sure to whom—and then we will let the rest of the system work on its own. That is a quick, effective way to kill Amtrak. Yes, there will be Amtrak service from Boston to Washington; that will continue. And the rest of the Amtrak rail passenger service will die. Just as certainly as I am standing here, we will see the collapse of rail passenger service in the rest of the country.

Last year, over 80,000 people boarded Amtrak in North Dakota. Anybody who wonders is Amtrak important, ask yourself what happened on September 11 following the devastating attacks by terrorists. Every single commercial airplane, every private airplane was

forced to land. They had to find an airport and land and stop that airplane. But Amtrak kept moving across the country, hauling people back and forth across the country. Rail service is an important part of this country's transportation system. It is that simple.

To come up with a plan that says, by the way, what we will do is cut off the Northeast corridor, which is the most lucrative part of the system, and separate it from the rest of the country, is a way of saying, let's kill Amtrak in most of America.

Talk about a thoughtless public policy proposal. This is it.

This Congress has some work to do. This administration needs to address next week. Mr. Gunn says that Amtrak is going to shut down. The President of Amtrak says he is going to shut down midweek unless the Department of Transportation and others get their act together and provide the interim financing necessary. They have an application filed.

One of my colleagues asked the people when they will act on that application. Answer: Maybe next week.

It ought to be now. This is not exactly a surprise. This problem with Amtrak has been lingering for a long time, and this Congress seems incapable, unwilling, or unable to make decisions that will put this rail passenger system on a sound financial footing. Some of my colleagues believe we just should kill Amtrak; let it die. What they forget is that we subsidize every other form of transportation. You name it, we subsidize it.

They say: But we don't want to have a rail passenger service that is subsidized. Everyone has the right to their opinion. But I think this country is well served, strengthened, and we are improved by having a national system of rail passenger service. No, it does not go everywhere. It does not connect every city to every other city. But it is a national system that connects the Northeast corridor to routes throughout our country in a way that is advantageous to millions of Americans.

This Congress and this administration have to wake up, and they have to wake up now. If we don't, and if they don't, we could find mid next week a country in which all rail passenger service is gone. If we don't, and if they don't, we could find beyond that, if they find the interim financing for next week, we could find a rail passenger system in which we have this crazy scheme of cutting off the Northeast corridor, creating some sort of quasi-private or quasi-public system with that, and saying the most lucrative portion of Amtrak shall not be available to assist in offsetting other revenues from other parts of the system. And we will inevitably create an Amtrak system that dies everywhere in the country except for the Northeast corridor. That is not a vision that is good for our country.

This is not the kind of issue that ought to hang up the Congress. It is

not complicated. We deal with a lot of complicated issues. This is not one of them. It is very simply a question to this administration that has been sitting on its hands for a long time on this issue. It ought to stop. It ought to take some action. And this Congress ought to take action for the long term.

The question is this: Do you believe in rail passenger service or not? Do you believe this country is strengthened by having a national system of rail passenger service? If you believe it is not and you don't like rail passenger service and you want to kill Amtrak, just go ahead and do it, if you have the votes.

But what is happening is inaction, both by the administration and inaction by Congress, which is slowly but surely strangling the life out of this system called Amtrak.

It makes no sense to me. Let's make a decision.

I count myself on the "aye" side. I say aye when you call the roll to ask do we want to support Amtrak; do we want to have a national rail passenger system in our future. The answer is clearly yes. I hope my colleagues will agree. I hope we can all agree to stop all of the foot dragging going on on this important question.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, there was an interesting piece in the Washington Post this morning, a senior aide to Republicans on the House side saying we want to—something to the effect of—write a prescription drug plan that basically is what the pharmaceutical industry wants.

I look at the House bill, and I report to the Senate that is exactly what we have: A bill that is made for the industry. The White House has no plan. They are talking about a discount comparable to going to the movie and you get a dollar or two off the ticket, but it has nothing to do with whether or not we will have prescription drugs that will be affordable.

The House Republicans have said low-income people earning roughly under \$11,000 are not going to have to pay anything. But when you look at the fine print, that's not true. If you have burial expenses worth \$1,500 or more, if you have a car that is worth more than \$4,500, then all of a sudden you might not be eligible for the protections for the low-income. That is stingy.

Then the thing that people are worried about is the catastrophic expenses. We must have a prescription drug plan that really responds to what we are hearing from all of our constituents: "Senator you must keep the premiums low; you have to keep the deductibles and the copays affordable; and you have to cover catastrophic expenses"—that is what people are terrified of, big expenses they can't afford.

What this Republican plan says is: We will provide a little coverage, up to \$2,000. But between \$2,000 and \$3,800 we won't cover anything.

That is nonsensical. It certainly is not a step forward for Minnesotans; it is a huge leap backwards.

I also want to mention to colleagues that the Republicans basically don't want to have a plan built into Medicare.

Now, I say to the Presiding Officer, the Senator from South Dakota, you can appreciate this with a smile. The Republicans don't want to have anything built into Medicare because they are scared that it might put restrictions on drug companies' price gouging. That is what Republicans are scared of. As a result, they say: We are going to farm it out to Medicare HMOs and to private insurance plans. But the private insurance plans are saying: We are not going to do this because the only people who will buy the prescription drug only plans are the ones who need it, and we need some people in the plan who don't need it; otherwise, we cannot make any money on it; it won't work.

Then they say the monthly premiums will be \$35 and the deductibles will be \$250. It turns out that this is not the case. Those numbers are merely suggestions. It could be that the deductible in one part of my state is \$250, and \$500 in another part of Minnesota, and \$750 in some other state.

I want to say on the floor of the Senate that you have these pharmaceutical companies pouring in all this money at the \$30 million fundraising extravaganza last night—\$250,000 a crack, or whatever, that I am reading about. Then you have some of the people saying we are going to basically write something that suits their interest. This is what we are dealing with.

I will keep pushing hard. I know you have to get 60 votes, and I know some people are going to be reluctant about this because we are going to have to take on the prerogatives of drug companies. But I think we ought to do the following: First of all, for low-income people, we ought to say, you are not going to pay anything, because they cannot afford it. Then we should set a 20 percent beneficiary copay. I would rather see us do that. Then we should set a catastrophic cap at \$2,000 a year; after that, you don't have to pay anymore of the cost of your prescription drugs. That is good catastrophic coverage. That makes sense.

How is it affordable? In two ways. First: Prescription drug reimportation from Canada, with strict FDA safety guidelines. There is no reason that Minnesotans, and people all over the United States, should not be able to reimport prescription drugs that were made in the U.S. back to the U.S. Pharmacists could do it, and families could too and get a 30-, 40-, 50-percent discount. There is no reason to vote no—except the pharmaceutical companies don't want it.