

While serving customers in a Florida pharmacy, he heard from seniors who could not afford to pay for their prescription drugs. Afterwards, he played a lead role in the effort to expand Medicare benefits to cover prescription drugs for seniors.

Despite my admiration for Senator GRAHAM, I must confess that I have had my disagreements with the senior Senator from Florida. More than once, I have heard him issue his boast that, "the future of America is Florida." We all know, of course, that the future of America is West Virginia. But neither this, nor other disagreements, has deterred or subtracted from my respect for him. He has made an enormous contribution to the Senate, where he has effectively and successfully served his State and our country.

Unfortunately, Senator GRAHAM has decided that, after three terms in the Senate, it is time to leave us. We will miss his wisdom, his decency, and his remarkable dedication in service to our Nation. Much was expected of Senator GRAHAM, and he, indeed, exceeded all expectations.

I wish him and his wife, Adele Khoury, the best of health and happiness in their retirement.

SENATOR DON NICKLES

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the motto of the great State of Oklahoma is "Labor Conquers All."

How perfect this is for the senior Senator from Oklahoma, Senator DON NICKLES, who has accomplished so much, and gone so far because of his willingness to work.

As a young man, after the death of his father, DON NICKLES worked his way through college as a janitor making minimum wage. After graduation, he returned to his home town of Ponca City to help run the family business, the Nickles Machine Corporation, of which he became vice president, and then general manager.

In 1978, he was elected to the Oklahoma State Senate.

Two years later, in 1980, he was elected to the U.S. Senate as part of the "Reagan Revolution." When he took office in 1981, he was just 31 years of age, the youngest Senator in the 97th Congress. Seventeen years later, in 1998, he became the only Oklahoma Republican ever elected to a fourth term in the U.S. Senate.

During his 24 years in the Senate, for better and for worse, Senator NICKLES has remained consistently true to his basic conservative principles. Congress Daily has justly referred to him as, "the keeper of the conservative flame."

Being true to his conservative principles has sometimes led him into taking some lonely stands. And his unflinching commitment to his conservative principles have led him to take positions that have angered constituents of his own State. His principles have even led him into positions on issues that have annoyed me. In addition to his views on tax cuts, I could

mention his efforts to block the Patient's Bill of Rights, his efforts to defeat increases in the minimum wage, and his effort to scuttle a Democratic initiative to help unemployed workers to be able to afford medical insurance coverage. Still, I have always admired and respected him for the firmness of his convictions and his beliefs, and his willingness to stay with them despite the consequences.

Even with the firmness of his convictions, he has never allowed himself to be trapped or bound by dogmatic partisan stands. Time and again I have watched and admired his willingness to reach across the aisle and work with Democratic Senators in bipartisan efforts to extend unemployment benefits, to win passage of a regulatory reform bill, and to secure passage of other measure that, otherwise, may well have gone down in defeat.

During his 24 years in this chamber, Senator NICKLES has served on the Senate Finance Committee, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Labor and Human Resources Committee, Small Business, and Joint Committee on Taxation.

For 14 of his 24 years in the Senate, he has served in Republican Senate Leadership, first as chairman of the Senate Republican Senatorial Committee, and then as chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, which he transformed from a lunch club into a "conservative think tank." In 1996 and again in 1998, he was elected Assistant Republican Leader, Republican Whip.

In January, 2003, Senator NICKLES left the Senate Republican leadership to become chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, and this is where I really came to know and appreciate what an outstanding legislator he is.

As I attended Budget Committee hearings and markups held by Chairman NICKLES, I came to realize his appreciation for the Senate as an institution, and his determination to make this institution work. I saw, first hand, his efforts to accommodate differences and to restore bipartisanship to the Senate Budget Committee. While he staunchly advocated his beliefs, Budget Chairman NICKLES emphasized politeness, courtesy, cordiality, and amiability. These qualities endeared him to Democratic and Republican members of the Budget Committee.

It was here in the work of the Budget Committee that I really saw his personal side. I remember Senator NICKLES's first Budget Committee markup as chairman. Senator NICKLES arrived at the markup and announced that his daughter had given birth to his first grandchild, Nicholas Fenton Rossiter. I had seen many times the look of pride on a new grandfather's face, and it inspired me to recite a poem for his grandson. "Dear Nicholas, first, in thy grandfather's arms, a newborn child, thou didst weep, while those around thee smiled, so live, that in thy lasting sleep, thou mayst smile while those around thee weep."

But at the same announcement of the birth of his grandson, I could not help myself in reminding Budget Chairman NICKLES that, given his support for a budget that embraces record deficits, his sweet grandchild was born owing \$24,000 on the national debt.

Although I failed to disabuse him of his egregious interpretation of the budget reconciliation process, Senator NICKLES, I am convinced, has come to understand the importance of debate in the Senate. Earlier this year, he devoted many hours to studying the budget rules for ways to eliminate the so-called "vote-a-ramas" that usually accompany the Senate's budget debates. To his great credit, Senator NICKLES demonstrated that rule changes are not necessary. Together with Senator CONRAD, he orchestrated this year's budget debate in a manner that allowed adequate time for all Senators to offer and debate their amendments. For the first time in many years, there was no "vote-a-rama," thanks to Senator NICKLES.

It has been reported in the media that Senator NICKLES was discouraged and disappointed that, in his final year as chairman of the Budget Committee, the Senate was not able to reach a consensus with the House of Representatives on a budget resolution. I hope Senator NICKLES realizes that the model of civility he created as chairman of the Budget Committee will be remembered and emulated, and that this accomplishment will survive in the annals of the Senate longer than any budget document.

While I must admit that I will not miss some of the values that he so eloquently advocated, and for which he so effectively fought, I do regret anytime the Senate loses a good person, and Senator NICKLES is a very good person. During his 24 years, this outstanding Senator, through his hard work, his friendliness and his dedication and determination, has helped make the Senate a better place, and for that, I am grateful and thankful. Time and again he has demonstrated that "labor" certainly does "conquer all."

I wish him and his wife, Linda, happiness, health, and prosperity as they enter the next phase in their lives.

BUSH TRANSPORTATION POLICIES ARE WRONG FOR RURAL AMERICA

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, 4 years ago, candidates George Bush and DICK CHENEY promised those of us from rural America that they understood the challenges we face and that they would work to make our lives better. Now, the President and Vice President are going back out to the rural parts of the country, to Appalachia, to my home State of West Virginia, to tell us that we have turned the corner. They are saying that, thanks to their work during these past 4 years, our prospects are improving. They tell us that, due to their policies, job growth is increasing. And they argue that if we want

more of the same in the future, we need to re-elect them to another term.

The reality is a far cry from the picture the President paints. Those of us in rural America, and for me that means the rugged Appalachian mountains of West Virginia, have known that, in order to improve our ability to attract and maintain good-paying jobs, we have to build an infrastructure to match those in the urban parts of America. That includes more four-lane divided highways and an improved national passenger rail network. But, the President has proposed policies to slow highway construction and shut down Amtrak. If enacted, these proposals would add to the staggering job losses already experienced in rural America under the Bush administration.

This Congress is now a year late in passing reauthorization legislation for the Federal Government's surface transportation programs. The main reason for this delay is that the President opposes efforts to adequately fund the construction of better and safer roads, particularly in rural America. In the meantime, transportation projects are stalled and tens of thousands of construction jobs have been lost.

In 1965, the Congress adopted the Appalachian Regional Development Act that promised a network of modern highways to connect the Appalachian Region to the rest of the Nation's highway network and, even more importantly, the rest of the Nation's economy. Absent the Appalachian Development Highway System, ADHS, my region of the country would have been left solely with a transportation infrastructure of dangerous, narrow, winding roads which follow the paths of river valleys and stream beds between mountains. These roads are still, more often than not, two-lane roads that are squeezed into very limited rights-of-way. They are characterized by low travel speeds and long travel distances and are often built to inadequate design standards.

The rationale behind the completion of the Appalachian Development Highway System is no less sound today than it was in 1965. Unfortunately, there are still children in Appalachia who lack decent transportation routes to school; and there are still pregnant mothers, elderly citizens and others who lack timely road access to area hospitals. There are thousands upon thousands of people who cannot obtain sustainable, well-paying jobs because of poor road access to major employment centers.

We have virtually completed the construction of the Interstate Highway System and have moved on to many other important transportation goals. However, the people of my region are still waiting for the Federal Government to live up to its promise, made some 39 years ago, to complete the Appalachian Development Highway System. And under the President's plan, they may have to wait several more decades.

Regrettably, the President has threatened to veto the highway bill that was passed by an overwhelming margin in the Senate. That bill would provide the funds necessary for a robust investment in rural America's infrastructure, including the Appalachian Development Highway System. It appears that under this administration, investments in road conditions are beginning to mirror the distribution of wealth in our country. The rich are getting richer while the poor get poorer.

The President and Vice President also have proposed to further limit our transportation options in rural America, including West Virginia, by underfunding and thereby shutting down Amtrak. Each of the Bush administration's four budget requests has targeted Amtrak and suggested funding levels that would have rendered the system inoperable. President Bush has proposed to limit Amtrak to the Northeast where it would serve only as a commuter rail network. Long distance trains, such as the Cardinal that provides a lifeline for communities across southern West Virginia, or the Capitol Limited that serves the eastern panhandle, would be eliminated under the President's plan.

Amtrak is a critical transportation link for people in all corners of this country. Each day, millions of people ride the rails to get to and from work, to visit family and friends living many miles away, or to travel on vacation. Make no mistake, if Amtrak closes operations, it will not be without great cost to communities both large and small. If Amtrak were to shut down, the Nation's transportation system would be thrown into chaos.

For many rural Americans, Amtrak represents the only major transportation link to the rest of the country. If the President has his way, West Virginians who live in or near Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg would lose access to the Capitol Limited train that runs from Washington, DC, to Chicago. Others who live in or near White Sulphur Springs, Hinton, Beckley, Thurmond, Montgomery, Charleston, and Huntington would lose access to the Cardinal train that runs from New York City to Chicago.

At a time when countries across the globe are moving forward by making investments in various passenger rail projects, whether it be high-speed bullet trains in Taiwan or Mag-Lev trains in Japan, President Bush has proposed to shut down America's passenger rail service. Next time the President or Vice President campaigns in Huntington, Charleston, or Beckley, I hope they will explain why they believe the economic prospects of these communities will be improved with the elimination of the national passenger rail network.

I have worked my entire Congressional career to ensure that West Virginia gets a fair shake from the Federal Government. My State was long

ignored by those deciding where Federal monies would be spent. Infrastructure development in rural America still lags far behind the investments being made in our urban areas. And this problem will only be compounded by the re-election of a President who is tone-deaf to the needs of rural America.

The President continues to make empty promises, continues to assure us that we have, indeed, turned the corner. But, for many rural Americans, that corner is on a dangerous, winding road with no help in sight.

ATTEMPTS TO KILL THE ESLGP

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the Bush administration would like us to think it has spent the last 4 years standing up for steel in West Virginia and across the Nation. But this administration has never stood up for steel. If the West Virginia steel industry has benefited at all in the past 4 years, it is in spite of the Bush administration.

The Bush administration said it would impose Section 201 tariffs on imports of unfairly traded steel, but then it lifted the steel tariffs 15 months early. The Bush White House refused to stand up for steel, and I would like to take this opportunity to remind America's steelworkers, including those in West Virginia, of this important fact.

Let's look at some other important facts: over the past 4 years there has been a program to provide tangible relief to steelworkers in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. That program is the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program, which I enacted in 1999 with bipartisan support to help steel companies in economic distress. Over the past 2 years, that program has served as an absolute life-line to thousands of steelworkers from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. The Steel Loan Guarantee Program has saved thousands of jobs in spite of the Bush administration, which has worked night and day to kill the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program.

The story of steel in West Virginia over the past 4 years is a dramatic story of hard work, hope, and triumph. But that is no thanks to this administration. Over the past 4 years, both Weirton Steel and Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel filed for bankruptcy due to unfair imports. But the Bush administration still thought it was a good idea to lift the steel tariffs 15 months ahead of schedule.

In dire straits, both companies sought the only real relief that was available to them, which were loan guarantees provided by the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program. The steel companies filed applications for emergency steel loan guarantees with the program's loan board to enable them to stay in business and not put 8,000 to 10,000 people out of work.

And what was the Bush administration's response? In both its fiscal year 2003 and 2004 budget requests, at exactly the time when Weirton and