

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Missouri. How much time does the Senator yield to himself?

Mr. BOND. Ten minutes.

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

#### HIGHWAY BILL FILIBUSTER

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I am on the Senate floor to explain why I am on the floor today. A week ago, I came to the Senate floor to raise what I think is a very serious point, and that is, we are being filibustered on the procedural motions to take the highway bill to a conference with the House.

I had the great privilege and pleasure back in January of 2003 to assume the chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the Environment and Public Works Committee, and I did so knowing full well that committee, along with the full committee, had the responsibility for drafting what I consider to be one of the most important infrastructure bills this Congress ever deals with, and that is the transportation bill or, as it is known by some, the highway bill. This year we are calling it SAFETEA. This is the acronym adopted by the administration to emphasize the fact that it is a safety-related measure.

Good highways, roads, and bridges, along with mass transit and other elements, are vitally important to our country in a number of ways. For those of us who are stuck in traffic around Washington, DC, being stuck in traffic is like having breakfast in the morning, and it is as reliable as flowers in the springtime. Better roads mean less congestion, less hassle. But there are many other items that are very important as well, because good roads and the lack of congestion mean less pollution. Cars sitting idling pollute the atmosphere, so the atmosphere is worse, the air quality is worse if you have congestion.

Highways are also important in another way. If we had passed the highway bill last winter or even when we passed it in February, we would have put people to work because every billion dollars of highway investment creates 47,000 jobs, and there is no question that we were waiting to see the jobs come back. We needed these highway jobs this year. We have missed this year's construction season.

Fortunately, the tax cuts passed by this body are working, and we are seeing an upturn in the economy, particularly in small business. That is another speech I will make on the Senate floor.

Tremendous numbers of people are going to work, as small business members, as proprietors starting their own businesses, 410,000 working selling their own products on e-Bay. They are creating good jobs. But we still need the jobs.

Beyond that, good highways and good transportation are essential for the long-term stability and growth of our

States, our communities, and our Nation.

When I was Governor, I spent a lot of time working on economic development issues, and there is one thing I can tell you: if you are trying to get jobs into a particular community, they have to have transportation, particularly if they are dealing with goods or with people who are coming into that community. Good roads mean good jobs. Our highways, our roads, our bridges, even our waterways are the sinews of economic commerce. Without good transportation, we do not have growth and we don't have jobs.

Finally, good highways mean safety. We kill about 43,000 people on the highways in the United States every year. The Department of Transportation says about a third of those killed are killed because of insufficient highway infrastructure. In other words, we have in Missouri many crowded two-way highways which have traffic that really demands a divided highway. When you have that, you have frustration, and very often people from out of State are not familiar with the curves and the hills and pass in areas where you cannot pass, and they have tragic head-on collisions. I say we kill roughly three people a day on Missouri's highways, and I think one out of three is killed because of inadequate highways. All you have to do is travel the highways and see the white crosses where people have died.

To deal with that situation, I set out to work on a bipartisan basis. We have worked since a year ago January very closely with all the interested parties—the people interested in road building, community development workers, union members, environmental groups who wanted to have improved environmental processes. We brought all of them together in a bipartisan—let me emphasize bipartisan—bill for which I have thanked my colleagues on the other side many times for their great cooperation. We brought a good bill to the floor: \$255 billion for highways and bridges over the next 6 years. Boy, we passed it with a whopping 76-vote majority in the Senate.

I go home and people say: What is happening to the highway bill?

I say: It is being filibustered.

They say: What? It passed by 76 votes.

I say: No, the simple procedural steps to move the bill to conference with the House are being filibustered.

They say: What?

I say: Yes, there are about six steps that have to be taken to send a bill to the House of Representatives so we can sit down in a conference and get a final bill that has to then pass both Houses and go to the President.

We have been working for more than a year and a half. It has been more than 7 months since the existing bill, TEA-21, expired. It has now been 7 weeks since the Senate passed a highway bill. It has now been 5 weeks since the House passed a highway bill. The

majority leader and I have gone to the Senate floor and asked unanimous consent three times to take the necessary steps to move the bill to the House.

All three requests have been objected to by my colleagues on the other side. Yesterday, a great group of citizens from the community of Saint Joseph, MO, was in my office. They traveled a long way to ask me: Why do we not have a highway bill? I told them I wish I had a reasonable answer, but I do not.

Last Friday, I went to Kansas City, MO, where we had the road-building group together and that was the union leaders, the contractors, the community development people, the local elected officials, and they gave me a stack of 43,000 signatures on petitions saying pass this bill. Unfortunately, my suitcase was not big enough and the restrictions made it difficult for me to bring it here with me, but if my colleagues want to see them we will bring 43,000 signatures to the floor to show how many Missourians want a highway bill.

They asked me why we have not even begun the process of meeting with the House. There is no good reason, except politics, and that is not a good reason.

Every single day someone asks me these questions, and now I ask my colleagues once again why can we not start a highway bill conference? Some on the other side say they demand to know what is going to come out of the conference. I would love to know what is going to happen tomorrow. I would love to know what is going to happen the day after tomorrow. No one can say with certainty what is going to come out of any conference.

This is too important a bill to be a political football. We passed a total bill of \$318 billion. The House passed one for a total of \$275 billion. We passed a much better bill. I want to see our bill passed. I want to see \$318 billion. I want to see the environmental streamlining in the bill that allows the environmental concerns to be raised early on in the process and dealt with, that makes it easier to do the planning.

The House bill had \$11 billion worth of specific earmarks. My colleagues probably read about it in the editorial pages. Now, the occupant of the chair may take great pride in the fact that some of those were in a far northwest State, but I say to my colleagues we are not going to be able to take a bill that has \$11 billion of earmarks that take away from the general allocation of funds among the States. So that is something we have to negotiate, but we need to do that to get a good bill.

I cannot speak for the folks on the other side as to why they are willing to kill the bill. They will not even let us go to conference to try to get the bill that we passed. They have to be banking, I guess, on perhaps a cynical notion that the American people will understand or they will just blame Republicans, even though it is their side currently undertaking to kill the legislation.

Are they killing it in hopes they can blame us? Is politics that cynical? I hope not. I thought we had to fight OMB to get the bill done, and I am willing to make that fight.

As a matter of fact, people who have been around a long time know I took on that fight against a President of my own party. The year I campaigned, he made three wonderful appearances for me. I have great respect for him, but he vetoed a highway bill, and I was the deciding vote that overrode that veto, much as I respected him, because I know how important highways are to my State and to the country.

Several months ago we started the normal bipartisan process of writing a highway bill. The bipartisanship carried through to a floor vote on the final bill. The Finance Committee provided the funds we needed. It was paid for, without a tax increase and without bonding.

After we passed the bill, my colleagues and I cheered our success and praised the cooperative efforts across the aisle; yet somehow, now my colleagues across the aisle tell me they do not trust me? Is this how good faith bipartisanship is honored?

Will someone come to the floor and tell me that I have not acted in good faith for days, weeks, and months through this process?

I have every intention to get a strong bipartisan conference report to the Senate floor and to the desk of the President but we cannot do that if the Democrats prevent us from negotiating the final bipartisan bill. Unless they let the process go, this bill is dead and they will have killed it; and for what?

My House counterpart Congressman PETRI may have said it best as quoted in yesterday's edition of BNA:

House Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee Chairman Tom Petri, R-Wis., hailed the move to "normal order," Petri said; people analyzing the situation said in the absence of an agreement—on a number—it was better to go back to conference because "there might have been wisdom in the ideas of the founding fathers.

The whole point of a conference with the House is to work out our differences and produce a final bill. It is past time to get to work on those differences. I also read a quote in the paper yesterday where the distinguished minority leader said his party did not want to "roll the dice" and hope they get adequate representation in conference.

Instead, I submit that my colleagues are "rolling the dice" with an even bigger gamble. Rather than even giving conference a chance, they are betting that voters will prefer procrastination over progress.

My constituents say, "Senator, didn't the same people raising objections vote for the bill?" They also ask, "Senator, didn't many Democrats help draft the bill?" Some even wonder "Didn't I hear Senator so and so say the Nation needs a highway bill now?"

The resounding answer to all of their questions is yes. Yes, my colleagues

helped draft the bill. Yes, my colleagues voted in favor of the bill. Yes, my colleagues make cries for a strong bill now. And, yes, unless the politics stop, they will also have killed this bill. To steal a line from some great philosopher, they are all bark, no bite.

One week ago today I was on the Senate floor attempting to move this process forward. Now Republicans in both Chambers of the Capitol are prepared to work in conference to resolve our differences. In the near future, we will vote in the Senate to determine who really wants to back up their bark with a bite.

Right now safety and quality of life on our roads are taking a back seat to political warfare that has nothing to do with transportation. It is time to end the filibuster on the highway bill.

That said, I renew my unanimous consent request from last week.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the House-passed highway bill, H.R. 3550; provided further, that all after the enacting clause, be stricken, the text of S. 1072, as passed, be inserted in lieu thereof; the bill be read a third time and passed; further, the Senate then insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House, and the Chair then be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate with a ratio of 11 to 10.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, at this time I am not able to make a statement; so, I will make a statement when our time comes. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. How much time do we have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty-seven minutes remaining.

Mr. DOMENICI. I will do my best to be finished in 10 minutes.

#### AMERICA NEEDS AN ENERGY POLICY NOW

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a subject that is dear to the heart of the Chair because Alaska contains much of the energy that the United States needs. Yesterday, crude oil closed at \$39.57 on the New York Exchange. Nationwide, the average price of gasoline is \$1.84, expected to rise 5 to 10 cents over the next several days, and even more as we enter the summer driving season which begins on Memorial Day.

Natural gas prices are also at a record high for this year, 70 percent higher than they were a year ago. We are increasingly dependent on imported supplies to set prices. In the Pacific Northwest, the snowpack is at 50 percent of average, and so hydroelectric generation will be at a record low this summer.

We currently import 55 percent of our oil. We will depend upon 70 percent for our demand by 2025. Meanwhile, we are

experiencing record temperatures in southern California where already there is a strain on the region's electricity system.

I do not know what sort of psychological barriers need to be broken in the Senate to finally pass comprehensive energy legislation. We are very close to breaking through every psychological barrier related to energy policy. Oil will soon cost \$40 a barrel. Gasoline will be over \$2 a gallon. Natural gas will be permanently over \$5 per MCF and the adequacy of our electricity generating grid this summer is now a simple calculus. Will it be hotter than usual? Because if so, we will have blackouts again.

My colleagues will notice that I no longer believe that our growing dependence on imported oil will have the psychological impact necessary to motivate my colleagues into action on the Energy bill. For my part, I am alarmed. I see us becoming 70-percent dependent on imported oil. I read of terrorist threats against overseas oil infrastructure and refining capacity, and I am amazed that I have colleagues who want to stop building our emergency supplies in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve or, even worse, call on us to use up those reserves now. In the past, the result of such activity was miniscule in terms of its impact on gasoline prices. It is just something to talk about. It is not something that will do anything.

Instead, yesterday a number of Senators came to the floor and called on the President to pressure OPEC to increase production and reduce prices. Does anybody assume he has not already done that? Does anybody assume they are interested in what we say today? It would be terrific if OPEC would do that, but I have to ask my colleagues, why would OPEC take us seriously? OPEC sees us for what we are. We are hooked and we cannot even do the most incremental steps to begin to address this plight.

OPEC sees a Congress that has talked about passing an energy bill for 10 years. They see a Congress that has failed every year for the last 3 years to pass an energy bill. OPEC sees an America that lacks the political will to address its own crisis. Instead, we blame and complain. If you were OPEC, would you take us seriously?

Some say passing an energy bill will not do a lot for foreign crude oil prices. I disagree. I think passing the first comprehensive energy bill to come out of this Congress in 12 years sends a strong signal to oil-producing nations. I think if we do more to conserve energy, increase production, diversify our energy supply, we will tell OPEC America is a country with unity, commitment, and the political will to address our most serious domestic problem, and that is our energy challenges.

If Senate Democrats mean what they say when they wring their hands and lament the rising oil prices, pass this bill. When we voted last week on the