

every person, wherever they are located in the world.

The North Korea Human Rights Act highlights this problem and establishes a position for this country that hopefully will be a model position for many countries around the world in dealing with the human rights tragedy inside North Korea.

I thank the Members of this body for allowing this presentation. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HELP THE VICTIMS OF AGRICULTURAL NATURAL DISASTERS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, South Dakotans have always been generous when our fellow Americans, even those living thousands of miles away, are suffering.

After September 11, we saw equipment makers, firefighters, school children, scout troops, church organizations, and countless other South Dakotans donate whatever they could to the victims. One ranch couple, themselves struggling, even sold 100 calves and dedicated the proceeds to the victims.

As hurricanes ravaged, and continue to threaten, Florida, South Dakotans sent not only their prayers, but also generators and plywood. Yet, while all of these things have taken place, South Dakota has been experiencing its own disaster, the slow-motion disaster of drought.

For the last several years, South Dakotans have been impacted to varying degrees by drought. In fact, 2002 was the worst drought since the Dust Bowl year of 1936. That is why I have worked so hard to get natural disaster aid for our state in the 2002 farm bill. The provision was not in the House-passed farm bill, and it was opposed and eventually stopped by the administration.

That is why I felt that as the Senate considered disaster assistance for the people of Florida, it was time for us to look for ways to help the people of South Dakota and other areas of the Nation who have been the victims of agricultural disasters. Make no mistake about it, this aid would help farmers and ranchers in Florida who have lost a majority of their citrus crop, much of the nursery stock and hundreds of head of cattle. In fact, farmers in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia and all along the eastern seaboard were seriously damaged by the myriad hurricanes, and the devastation may not be over. But for farmers and ranchers in the upper Midwest, the drought has continued for years.

On August 17, I wrote to the President expressing my support for assist-

ance to hurricane victims and asking him to include other natural disaster victims, including drought-related disaster relief, in any emergency-funding request that he might send to Congress. While the Bush administration did not include this funding in its emergency hurricane funding requests, I still believed there was a way to secure this assistance.

When the first disaster assistance bill for Florida was on the floor of the Senate, I attempted to include agricultural disaster assistance in that legislation. While a procedural maneuver blocked that effort, we were able to secure a commitment from Senator FRIST to allow a vote on drought relief as part of the Homeland Security appropriations measure. On September 15, we got that vote, and the Senate passed a bipartisan provision for \$2.9 billion in emergency disaster relief to agricultural producers.

This is a tremendously important for farmers and ranchers throughout the Nation, including those in South Dakota. It is important for our nation's rural economy, and for all of the communities that have waited too long for this relief.

The package includes \$2.5 billion in assistance to crop producers through the crop disaster program, \$475 million to livestock producers through the livestock assistance program, and \$20 million for the tree assistance program. While some of us would have preferred assistance for both 2003 and 2004, the provision that passed would allow producers to choose compensation for either the 2003 or 2004 crop year.

The Senate's passage of this assistance is not the final step in this process, and the Senate and the House are currently meeting to resolve the differences they have with the Homeland Security bill.

I am deeply troubled by news reports that some in the House Republican leadership and the Bush administration are opposed to this most recent emergency aid provision. I would hope that the broad bipartisan support for this disaster provision in the Senate will convince the House and the President to provide the support farmers and ranchers across the country so badly need.

I wholeheartedly support providing States like Florida with the assistance they need to bounce back from a hurricane. By unanimously approving this agriculture-related disaster aid, the Senate also acknowledged something South Dakotans know far too well: victims of agricultural natural disasters are no less deserving of assistance than victims of hurricanes, floods, or tornadoes.

In South Dakota, we believe in helping our neighbors through tough times. But sometimes, we need some help, too.

I am hopeful that help will soon be on the way, and the administration will reverse its long-standing opposition to agricultural disaster aid for

farmers and ranchers throughout the Nation.

STATUS OF THE TRANSPORTATION BILL

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about the state of the transportation bill. That bill expired a year ago, and we have been operating on short-term extensions ever since. The delay has denied us the opportunity to create over 100,000 jobs and has led to continuing uncertainty in the States as they try to make contract and construction decisions without knowing what funding will be available. Our states, our communities, and our infrastructure deserve better.

It is not as if there have been no efforts to pass a new and stronger transportation bill. The Senate-passed transportation bill was a model of bipartisanship. It met the needs of States like South Dakota, which have a sparse population, but have a large geography and many miles of roads. Likewise, it ensures that the more populated States were treated fairly.

In the Senate bill, we were able to reach an agreement that worked for everyone. Our bill not only treated States fairly, but it treated transit fairly. There has often been a struggle between highways and transit, and the Senate bill struck a good balance. More importantly, it was a bill that did right by America's families, making critical investments in our infrastructure, and creating nearly 2 million jobs in the process.

The one area where we were unable to reach agreement was on the rail provisions, and I am hopeful that we can work to remedy that as we move forward. Having a dependable and affordable rail system to transport goods, including agricultural commodities, is critical to our Nation.

It is clear to me that despite the broad bipartisan agreement we were able to reach in the Senate, the rejection of that agreement by the President and some of the House majority leadership means that we are being denied the opportunity to debate and pass a bipartisan transportation bill.

Senators BOND and REID have suggested that we give some certainty to the States by ensuring that they will have a steady funding stream for the next 6 months. Senator SHELBY and Senator SARBANES, our leaders on the Banking Committee and on transit issues, agree. I, too, think that this is, unfortunately, the best course of action given the situation in which we find ourselves. And so I am hopeful that the majority leader will take up the bill early next week.

The reason for not completing this bill is clearly over the question of resources. The administration has not been willing to consider any bill that is anything other than their proposed \$256 billion. In fact, the President threatened to veto both the House and Senate-passed bills because they contained

greater levels of investment. And yet, to invest significantly less than the Senate was willing to invest fails to meet the goals I just discussed: to treat all States and modes of transportation fairly.

That does not mean that the Senate level is the only level and that a long-term bill cannot be completed at a lower investment level. But I have not seen, nor do I believe that anyone has seen, a willingness to seriously discuss that possibility.

Thus, we find ourselves in the unfortunate position of once again being up against the end of another extension. Rather than keeping States in the dark about their future, it seems to me that the bipartisan approach of Senators BOND, REID, SHELBY and SARBANES makes sense. In fact, several transportation groups have also called for a longer-term extension. As I said, I hope and urge the majority leader to take up the Bond-Reid transportation extension early next week.

Transportation has, by and large, been a bipartisan endeavor. After all, our economy, our infrastructure, and our Nation's families need and deserve a good transportation bill, one that will create good jobs and provide the investments in our Nation's infrastructure that are so desperately needed. I am hopeful that we can do better, that we will renew our efforts and continue to work as hard as possible to find the bipartisan solution that has been so elusive. And I hope that we can reach that compromise sooner rather than later.

I yield the floor.

HOMELAND SECURITY NEEDS A GREEN LIGHT, NOT A BLUE SLIP

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, last week, the Senate approved overwhelmingly the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations bill. This bill makes critical investments in our protections here at home. And in light of the constant threat warnings from law enforcement and homeland security officials, those investments cannot be made quickly enough. Yet it has been 10 days since the Senate passed the measure and the House has not even appointed conferees.

Why has any progress toward protecting the people hit a brick wall? The legislation is in jeopardy because of the judgment of the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. I do not intend to talk about the chairman in a negative light. But I must point out to Senators that the chairman's actions could jeopardize the entire Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

During Senate debate, Democrat and Republican Senators worked to invest additional dollars in homeland security. We must work to close the gaps in our protections here at home. Too many exist, and you can be sure that, if we know where those gaps are, so do the terrorists.

That is why it was welcomed on both sides of the aisle when the Senator from Montana, Mr. BAUCUS, suggested a way to include \$784 million in homeland security protections without violating arbitrary congressional spending limits. The Senator from Montana suggested that we help to protect Americans from terrorist attack by extending existing customs user fees that are set to expire in March 2005. It was a commonsense approach, one that I applaud Senator COCHRAN, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Homeland Security panel, and the majority leader, Senator FRIST, for embracing. It was common sense because many of the agreement provided funding to key programs within the Department of Homeland Security, most of which are customs related, and did so without violating the budget caps or adding to the deficit.

The Senate adopted that funding, approved the bill, and asked the House for a conference. We were making progress. We were helping to save lives.

But then came the disappointment. The Senate was informed that the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee has recommended that the House of Representatives "blue-slip" this legislation, returning the measure to the Senate. But the funding will help to protect this country from attack, and we should not allow congressional turf battles to stop it.

Congressman MARTIN OLAV SABO, the ranking member of the House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee, and I have written to the Speaker of the House and urge that the Speaker help to move this legislation forward. We ought to send it to conference, complete our work, and help to protect our country. Delay is unacceptable.

The additional funding provides needed investments to protect our borders, equip first responders, enhance air and rail security, and ensure that security measures are provided to harden potential terrorism targets.

Specifically, the additional funding will allow Customs and Border Protection to purchase additional radiation detectors to respond to the threat of a nuclear or radiological weapon being smuggled into this country. CBP is far behind on its plan for deploying 2,037 radiation portal monitors at our ports. The additional \$50 million provided by this amendment will allow CBP to deploy radiation portal monitors to screen 100 percent of inbound containerized cargo at 30 additional seaport terminals.

This investment will provide Immigration and Customs Enforcement with an additional \$50 million to address a manpower shortage within the Federal Air Marshal program and be more aggressive in placing air marshals on high-interest flights.

The funding being stymied in the House would increase resources to equip and train our nation's firemen by providing an additional \$50 million

through the fire grants program, which is one of the best run programs in the Federal Government.

The money would address the shortage of border employees by providing \$150 million for more border inspectors and agents, and immigration and customs criminal investigators. The Department of Homeland Security has not yet met the northern border staffing goals set in the U.S. PATRIOT Act. An additional \$50 million is also included for the detention and removal of illegal aliens.

This amendment strengthens the northern border by providing an additional \$200 million to speed up the development of five air wings along the northern border which will track, identify, and intercept aircraft that are unauthorized to enter U.S. airspace.

The funds advance efforts to protect the millions of Americans who use public transportation over 32 million times per work day. The additional \$128 million was approved by the Senate so that the Department can pursue investments to harden the security of transit systems by investing in additional law enforcement, canine teams, and training.

The legislation invests an additional \$56 million to the Emergency Management Performance Grants program to help emergency managers at the state and community level to prepare, respond, and recover from all hazards.

Finally, the bill ensures that \$50 million goes to high-risk non-profit organizations to develop security plans and make necessary improvements to prevent a terrorist attack.

The Department of Homeland Security is working day and night to stop potential terrorist attacks. But the Department cannot operate if it does not have any money. We cannot wait to address gaps in our nation's defenses while this new department is crafted. Terrorists will not wait to attack anew.

We cannot afford delay. The Senate has passed this critical legislation; now it requires the approval of the entire Congress. This bipartisan legislation must move quickly to bolster our weaknesses, address our shortfalls, and protect American lives.

I urge the Speaker, and the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee to drop this threat of delay. The President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Attorney General, the CIA Director, and the FBI Director have each stated quite clearly that the country is at risk of attack. It serves no one's best interests to bicker over turf battles when lives are at stake. For the sake of the people, for the sake of the nation, I urge the House to strengthen the homeland security protections and make life more difficult for the terrorists. Don't blue-slip this funding. Green light it instead.