

into the intransigence of the administration a year ago, and with the insistence of the President, the concurrence of the House, and were unable to get what the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator GRASSLEY, said was a fiscally sound and balanced—in terms of the highway trust fund revenues—measure in the Senate.

So while I concur with the Senator from Wyoming, I might also point out, as it relates to this particular legislation, the Democratic leader, Senator REID, last week wrote to the Senate Republican leadership and urged that this measure be brought up this week. I commend Senator FRIST and Senator MCCONNELL for deciding to proceed on this very important matter for the people of this country rather than some of the shenanigans that others were urging upon them. So we are proceeding on a measured basis, but not with any resistance or opposition by anybody on this side of the aisle.

We voted overwhelmingly to proceed on the motion to proceed earlier in the week. It is unfortunate timing that our long-planned Senate recess for next week will truncate the process. But I share the Senator's view that this bill needs to be enacted as expeditiously as possible. I hope the conference committee will be able to proceed as quickly as possible thereafter, while recognizing the Senate bill has been, and continues to be, vastly superior to the House version in terms of additional funding. Those are matters worth arguing about and, hopefully, prevailing on because Minnesota needs the money even as much as we need the bill to be completed.

Mr. President, if there is no immediate business related to this measure—I spoke earlier with the bill's manager—I ask unanimous consent that I have up to 10 minutes to speak as in morning business. Is this a propitious time to do so?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. DAYTON are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. INHOFE. Mr. President, some people are not aware that when you have something as massive as a highway bill, it is not just the committee I chair, the Environment and Public Works Committee, but other committees are involved, including the Finance Committee, the Banking Committee, and the Commerce Committee. As of right now, we don't have the titles that come from those three com-

mittees, but we will have one right now.

AMENDMENT NO. 573 TO AMENDMENT NO. 567

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SHELBY, I send an amendment to the desk, the Federal Public Transportation Act of 2005, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the pending amendment is set aside.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. INHOFE], for Mr. SHELBY and Mr. SARBANES, proposes an amendment numbered 573.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of April 26, 2005 under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me reemphasize to my friend from Indiana, as soon as this amendment is disposed of, we will return to the regular order, which is the pending Bayh amendment.

This amendment, which was crafted on a bipartisan basis in the Senate Banking Committee, provides \$51.6 billion to address growing public transportation needs across the country.

It provides for record growth for public transportation and for the first time recognizes the growing needs in rural communities across the country, including my State and the State of the Presiding Officer, Oklahoma, which has a rural population of greater than 57 percent. In fact, in the final year of this bill, the rural transportation program is doubled over its TEA-21 levels.

Additionally, it creates a new formula within the urbanized area formula called the "Rural Low Density" formula. Rural transit is as challenging to provide as the distances between employment centers and health care centers are great.

This amendment also creates a formula to recognize "growing States"—those locations which are forecast to grow more quickly than the average over the course of the next 15 years. This change will allow those States, which includes Oklahoma, to be proactive with regard to their transportation needs.

Finally, this amendment makes several modifications to enhance the role of the private sector in public transportation. By creating opportunities for competition, public transportation services can be provided more efficiently.

I am happy to have had the opportunity to work with Senator SHELBY on the development of this amendment. I look forward to working with him on final passage and a successful conference report.

I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be agreed to, that the language be considered as original text as part of the substitute for the purpose of further amendment.

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

The amendment (No. 573) was agreed to.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I thank Senators SHELBY and SARBANES because we cannot really entertain amendments that affect these titles until we have them done. We are anxious to get the other two titles on the bill.

I will repeat our plea for people to come over with their amendments because the Senator from Indiana has agreed that he would set his amendment aside when people come down, with the understanding we would return to his amendment upon completion of those amendments.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me repeat one more time, we are going to be open for business, as we were today, tomorrow. We will invite people to come down.

I want to get on the record right now, very often we go through this exercise and when we get close to the end of the consideration of the bill, when cloture has been filed, everyone comes running and screaming, saying they want to offer an amendment. Now is the time to do it. Members can bring them down anytime tomorrow. I certainly invite any Member to come down and offer the amendment tomorrow.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent we now go into a period of morning business, where each Senator may speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, this week, the Nation celebrates National Small Business Week. It is a time when all of us join together, without any partisanship at all, to celebrate the hard work of millions of American entrepreneurs. At the Small Business Administration Expo last night at the Smithsonian, we recognized countless Americans who have had the courage to put everything they have on the line in order to turn an idea into a business. We celebrated the business people of the year from all of the 50 States in the country.

Today, these Americans, I think all of us recognize, are much more than small business owners. They are employers, community leaders, and they

are the people who give life to the American dream. Our small business owners not only remind us of the opportunities that America provides to those who are willing to work for it, but they remind us how much opportunity small business itself provides to all Americans. They drive our economy, compromising over 99 percent of all firms and over half of our GDP.

Two-thirds of all new American jobs are created by small businesses, and a majority of Americans depend on their small business employer for health insurance. Our small businesses are responsible for countless inventions and innovations that have elevated the standards of living in our country and for people around the world.

The entrepreneurial spirit I am talking about is alive and well in our country, though it faces a number of particular challenges: rising health care costs, imports, a reduction in the numbers of people going into innovative jobs and pursuing careers in the sciences and in research and development. Nevertheless, three out of four adults in America have considered starting a small business. With the advent of the Internet, those numbers are rapidly going up.

I know my colleagues are familiar with the Small Business Administration in a lot of different ways. We all understand how it is charged with defending small business interests in the country. It helps small businesses tackle issues ranging from initial development issues and startup issues and access to capital to Federal contracting and trade assistance. Those efforts are working relatively well. Businesses such as Staples, Intel, Nike, America Online, Eskimo Joe's, Callaway Golf, FedEx, Hewlett-Packard, Jenny Craig, Ben and Jerry's, Winnebago, Sun Microsystems, Outback Steakhouse—you don't think of them as small businesses in need of Federal assistance. But the fact is every one of those businesses, and many more that have become household names in America, got their initial startup with Federal assistance, with venture capital or loans from the SBA, which they could not have gotten otherwise and couldn't get from traditional sources. Their owners have proven that sometimes outstanding business ideas deserve a chance, even when traditional lenders or venture capitalists won't take that chance.

So we can ask the question, how many of these businesses may not have made it without help from the SBA? How many jobs would have been lost? How much tax revenue would have been lost to communities and the country? The benefits of small business expansion are numerous: a stronger economy, higher paying jobs, better prospects for women and minorities, innovation, cutting-edge products, increased opportunities for countless Americans.

What is unique about the SBA investments is they pay for themselves and

they pay for the SBA budget many times over with the tax revenues to the country. So supporting our small business is a win-win proposition for Americans. We can afford it. The people want it. Our economy needs it.

That is why it is very hard to understand why this administration does not provide the full measure of support to the SBA and to those businesses. The SBA budget has been cut by over one-third since 2001—the largest reduction of any Federal agency, despite the fact that it is one of the few Federal agencies that completely pays for itself. Those cuts would have been far greater if Congress had not intervened. I am pleased to say, on a bipartisan basis with Senators on both sides of the aisle, we joined together to intervene. The chairwoman of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, Senator SNOWE, and I have worked with Members of both sides in order to provide the funding that was necessary and to prevent further cuts from taking place. Time and again we have received unanimous support in the Senate to rebuff proposed administration cuts that would have gone further. That is because supporting small businesses is not a partisan issue, and it never should be. We should not have to fight so hard to provide support for something that so obviously benefits all of us.

The administration loves to claim the pro-business mantle, but if they were candid with the American people, they would clarify that most of that support, as we see in the Energy bill or the tax bill, means big business, not small business.

If you look at the tax cuts, the administration claims the tax cuts primarily benefit small businesses, but in reality, only the biggest small businesses get the majority of those cuts. More than half of small business owners received less than \$500 in tax cuts, and almost a quarter of those businesses got no tax cuts at all.

If you look at energy policy, you can see that while American families and small businesses have struggled with gas prices, oil companies earned record profits in the fourth quarter of 2004. Exxon-Mobil was up 218 percent. Conoco-Phillips was up 145 percent. Shell was up 51 percent. ChevronTexaco was up 39 percent. BP was up 35 percent.

Show me the small business in America, except the rare small business, that saw that kind of growth in the fourth quarter of last year.

You can also look at this disparity at what is happening with respect to Federal contracts right now. Congress set the goal of the Federal government awarding at least 23 percent of its contracting dollars to small businesses. So what did the administration do? They allowed \$2 billion worth of contracts to be reported as going to small businesses when, in fact, they went to some of the largest businesses in the country. The money went to Raytheon, in my State, Northrop Grumman, General

Dynamics, and Hewlett-Packard. Even the State of Texas was treated as a small business.

An administration concerned with small business ought to be outraged by these facts, and it ought to do something about it. This administration has facilitated the distortion of that Federal agency contracting goal of 23 percent and, in fact, allowed a process to go forward that has undermined our ability to help the small businesses that need it.

In addition, the administration has refused requests for an audit. They have not taken substantive steps to reform the contracting process. They have not prosecuted anyone for misrepresenting their organization as a small business. And now the administration is supporting efforts to make it easier for the Energy Department to shift money away from small businesses.

A bipartisan Senate has repeatedly stood up to the administration and called them to account for being too willing to ignore the challenges that face small businesses. It is time to again join forces to assure that this new challenge to small businesses, which is the diversion of federal contracts and the distortion of the standards that apply to what is a small business and what is a large business, ought to be appropriately adjusted.

Small businesses are also particularly hard hit by health care. Most small business owners want to do right by their employees. They try hard to do that, but too many of them just cannot afford to offer health care anymore. Premiums are rising faster than inflation or wages, with double-digit increases in each in the last 4 years.

Since 2000, the premiums for family coverage have gone up 59 percent compared with inflation increases of nearly 10 percent and wage growth of over 12 percent. Some small businesses have reported premium increases of as much as 70 percent in one year. As a result, 5 percent fewer small businesses offered health benefits to their workers in 2004 than in 2001. By contrast, 99 percent of the businesses with 200 or more employees offer their workers health insurance. Of 45 million uninsured Americans, almost two-thirds are small business owners, their employees and their families.

So I think all of us understand that in a nation founded on equity and equality of opportunity, it is important for us to address the question of health care costs. We need a plan that gives small business access to the range of plan choices and consumer product protections that are offered through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. And we need to give these small businesses affordable options through refundable tax credits and Federal reinsurance plans that will reduce premiums for everyone.

Small businesses and entrepreneurs are America's single greatest economic resource. There is not a big business in

America that did not begin in someone's garage, someone's attic, someone's basement, where people did not work out of a car for a period of time in an effort to try to grow that business. Time and again small businesses, not large corporations, have pulled our economy out of trouble by creating the jobs and the products of the future.

For many entrepreneurs, the SBA is their only chance to earn their fair share of the American dream. As we celebrate small businesses and entrepreneurship this week, we all have a responsibility to defend that dream. We need to ensure that the SBA is adequately funded. We need to ensure legislation never shortchanges small businesses, and we need to provide a real plan for small business health care. The doors of opportunity must be open to everyone.

ALBERT EISELE'S ARTICLES ON IRAQ

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, when I went to work in the Washington office of then-Senator Walter Mondale from Minnesota as a young, beginning legislative assistant in 1975, Al Eisele was a Washington correspondent for the St. Paul Dispatch and Pioneer Press, Duluth Herald and News-Tribune, and other Knight-Ridder newspapers. In 1976, after Senator Mondale was elected as Jimmy Carter's Vice President, he named Mr. Eisele as his press secretary and senior adviser, a position that Mr. Eisele held for the next 4 years.

"He previously covered me as a Washington correspondent for Minnesota newspapers during my 11 years in the Senate, so I obviously know him well," Senator Mondale later explained. "He was one of the most well-respected and knowledgeable reporters in Washington, with a reputation for even-handedness, incisive reporting, and personal integrity, which is why I asked him to join my staff."

After the Carter-Mondale administration, Mr. Eisele helped found the Center for National Policy in Washington; was a fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard; served as an assistant to Mr. William C. Norris, the founder and chief executive officer of Control Data Corporation in Minnesota; and started his own literary agency and international consulting firm, Cornerstone Associates.

For the past 10½ years, this native Minnesotan has been instrumental in the success of *The Hill*, a nonpartisan, nonideological newspaper covering Congress, that he helped found. Indeed, the April 27, 2005, issue of *The Hill* includes the 500th column Mr. Eisele has written since the newspaper's inaugural issue of September 21, 1994. In addition, he has acted as a mentor for more than 50 young journalists whom he helped train and who now work for many major newspapers, magazines, and broadcast organizations.

Last month, Mr. Eisele traveled to Iraq to get, as he wrote, "a firsthand

look at what the American military is up against in this greatest projection of American power since Vietnam."

With his customary dedication, he did not just visit Iraq; rather, he traveled throughout the country for 10 days and interviewed everyone, from generals to privates, high-ranking Iraqi officials to ordinary citizens, visiting Members of Congress, fellow journalists covering the war, and private contractors involved in rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure.

His subsequent articles and columns in *The Hill* provided many compelling accounts of personal realities there, as well as very valuable insights.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that those articles be printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATORS ENCOURAGED BY PROGRESS IN IRAQ

BAGHDAD, Mar. 23, 2005.—Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) led a bipartisan Senate delegation to Baghdad Tuesday and left little doubt that the Senate will soon approve an \$81 billion supplemental appropriation passed by the House last week, most of which will go to pay for rebuilding Iraq's war-torn economy and countering insurgent violence.

Reid and his six colleagues held a news conference at the end of a whirlwind one-day visit during which they met with top U.S. military and diplomatic officials in Iraq and leaders of the three internal factions competing for control of the government being established in the wake of the January elections.

Reid, who was making his first trip to Iraq, said the Senate will take up the supplemental appropriations bill when it returns after the Easter recess, and indicated there is little real opposition to it. He stressed the need for continued U.S. support for reconstruction efforts, along with training Iraqi security forces to replace U.S. military personnel and help bolster the Iraqi economy and political structure.

"Everyone understands that reconstruction is an important part of the U.S. mission here," he declared.

Reid and his colleagues, who included four Democrats and two Republicans, all indicated they are encouraged by signs of progress in carrying out the three-pronged U.S. strategy of support for bolstering Iraq's security forces, economy and political system.

"One of the people we met with today called Iraq 'an infant democracy,' and we can't leave this infant alone," said Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). "I believe what we are seeing here is good."

Sen. Robert Bennett (R-Utah) compared this visit with an earlier visit he made last year. "I find a quiet optimism instead of a cautious optimism," he said. He added, "I think that the elections and the strengthening of the Iraqi security forces have given us hope that the seed of democracy has been planted here. There's still a lot to do and we still have a lot to worry about, but the signs are more optimistic now than before."

Even Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who has been a leading critic of the Bush administration's Iraq policy, seemed upbeat about the future of the new Iraq government.

Declaring that the success of Iraq's future stability "greatly depends on the training of Iraqi security forces," she said, "we got a very, very upbeat report" from the top U.S.

military officials, including Gen. George Casey Jr., who commands the multinational coalition forces, and Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the NATO training mission here.

She added that it's essential that the new government, which will be put together in the coming months, include all elements of Iraqi society, especially women. "I think it's fair to say that all of us today gave that message" to the leaders of the three main ethnic factions in Iraq, the majority Shiites, the minority Sunnis and the Kurds.

However, Boxer also indicated after the group's meeting with the man who is expected to be Iraq's next prime minister, Ibrahīm al-Jaafari, that he is not as upbeat about the quality of the Iraqi police and security forces.

"My sense was that he was certainly in no rush to hand over security to his new police force," she said.

Other members of the Senate delegation included Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and freshman Ken Salazar (D-Colo.).

Salazar, who was making his first visit to Iraq, said, "This trip has enforced the enormity of the challenge in Iraq and the need to help the Iraqi people."

"TRANSLATORS ARE A SPECIAL TARGET"

BAGHDAD, Mar. 25, 2005.—After 38 years in the United States, Paul Orahā is back in his native Baghdad and working only a short distance from the neighborhood where he grew up. But he's not about to look up any old friends who might still be around.

"We are a target now," said Orahā, who works as a translator for the U.S. Embassy and U.S.-led Multinational Coalition. "Translators are a special target because many Iraqis feel we are traitors because we're working for Americans against Iraq."

Orahā, 65, left Baghdad with his family in 1966 for Detroit, where his father, a Mercedes Benz parts supplier, found work in the auto industry. While his personal history is different, Orahā's situation is the same as thousands of other Iraqis whose lives are at risk because they work for, or cooperate with, the Multinational Coalition.

Many Iraqi civilians, as well as military and security personnel, government officials and civic leaders have been killed or wounded by Iraqi insurgents and foreign Islamic extremists since the March, 2003 invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein.

Orahā, who later moved from Detroit to San Diego and served in the U.S. Navy, returned to Iraq in July, 2004, now works and lives in the heavily guarded international enclave in the middle of Baghdad known as the Green Zone. A nearby bridge that commemorates the bloody 1958 coup in which Saddam's Baathist Party took power links the Karada neighborhood across the Tigris River where he grew up.

And even though there are constant reminders of the terrorist threat—several mortar rounds hit the bridge on Monday night but did not injure anyone—Orahā feels the security situation is improving.

"This area used to get hit almost every day, but now it's almost every other week," he said while smoking a cigarette and drinking coffee one recent morning outside the Rasheed Hotel where and he and many other Americans and foreigners live. "Security is the biggest problem here, but I think we're making tremendous progress because the attacks have slowed down."

Orahā said he thinks most Iraqis "want us to be here and stay here. They're very appreciative that we got rid of Saddam and they look forward to having a better life. But they're very concerned about the security