

died, and three others sustained serious injuries. It remains the worst transportation disaster in my State's history.

Today, the National Transportation Safety Board will begin investigating the bridge collapse in Minnesota. While it is too early to conclude what exactly caused the collapse, we do know that a catastrophic structural failure of some sort occurred. We also know that this truss bridge was constructed in 1967 and—according to an interview on National Public Radio this morning—likely nearing the end of a 50-year operational lifetime.

The tragedy in Minnesota is the most recent example of our national infrastructure crumbling before our very eyes. Indeed, this is not a problem only affecting Minneapolis or Greenwich or—in the case of the recent steam pipe eruption—New York City. It is a problem affecting every State, county, city, and community between San Diego, CA, and Bangor, ME. For too long we have taken our infrastructure systems—our roads, bridges, mass transit systems, drinking water systems, wastewater systems, and public housing properties—for granted. For too long we have failed to invest adequately in their long-term sustainability. And today, we find ourselves in a precarious position concerning their future viability—a precarious position that is costing lives, endangering lives, and jeopardizing the high quality of life we have come to enjoy and expect as Americans.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers in their seminal 2005 Infrastructure Report Card, the current condition of our Nation's major infrastructure systems earns a grade point average of D and jeopardizes the prosperity and quality of life of all Americans.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, 27.1 percent of all bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The average age of bridges in our country is 40 years. Thirty-three percent of all urban and rural roads are in poor, mediocre or fair condition. Data from the Federal Transit Administration shows our mass transit systems are becoming increasingly unable to handle the growing demands of passengers in a safe and efficient manner. A significant percentage of our Nation's drinking water and wastewater systems are obsolete; the average age of these systems ranges in age from 50 years in smaller cities to 100 years in larger cities. Clearly, these statistics are alarming and they are not getting any better.

In their Infrastructure report Card, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that \$1.6 trillion is needed over a 5-year period to bring our Nation's infrastructure systems to a good condition.

Regrettably, our current infrastructure financing mechanisms, such as formula grants and earmarks, are not equipped by themselves to absorb this cost or meet fully these growing needs.

They largely do not address capacity-building infrastructure projects of regional or national significance; they largely do not encourage an appropriate pooling of Federal, State, local and private resources; and they largely do not provide transparency to ensure the optimal return on public resources.

Early yesterday afternoon, on, I joined with my colleague, Senator HAGEL, in introducing bipartisan legislation to establish a new method through which the Federal Government can finance more effectively large "capacity-building" infrastructure projects of substantial regional or national significance by using public and private capital. I will say to my colleagues that our legislation focuses on the long-term capacity and sustainability of infrastructure facilities just like the bridge that carried Interstate 35W over the Mississippi River.

Fixing our Nation's crumbling infrastructure is an issue that cannot be neglected or deferred any further. This demands our immediate attention and commitment in the Senate. The quality of life in our country hangs in the balance.

Again, I extend my thoughts and prayers to those in Minnesota.

ETHICS REFORM

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, following the tragic collapse of the 35W bridge in Minneapolis that took place yesterday, August 1, 2007, I returned to Minnesota this morning to learn all of the facts, and pledge the necessary Federal resources for the victims, the investigation, and the repair. By returning to Minnesota, I was, unfortunately, unable to be in Washington, DC, to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House Amendment S. 1; and the motion to concur with the House Message to S. 1. Had the tragedy in my State not taken me back to Minnesota, I would have voted for the motion to invoke cloture as well as the underlying bill. In short, I would have voted to change the course in Washington.

When I arrived in Washington in January, my husband, daughter and I pulled up in our family Saturn, loaded with my husband's college dishes and a shower curtain that I found in the basement from 1980. But we brought a little more than dishes and shower curtains. We brought a commitment for change something the people of our State Democrats, Independents, and Republicans, from Worthington to Moorhead to Duluth to Rochester called for very clearly and loudly in November.

We also brought a Minnesota moral compass, grounded in a simple notion of Minnesota fairness: A notion that all people should be on equal footing in the halls of Congress.

But they can't be on equal footing when their elected representatives are selling their votes for trips to Scotland or have cash in the freezer. They can't

be on equal footing unless this new Congress delivers real, meaningful ethics reform.

That's why I came to Washington back in January and why I am delighted to see that the Senate passed a strong, bipartisan ethics reform package today.

Instead of maintaining business-as-usual, this ethics legislation will bring meaningful and robust reform in a number of critical areas.

Among other things, this legislation will bring about more transparency for lobbyist bundling and political campaign fund activity; greater transparency in earmarking; a strong lobbyist gift ban; meaningful limits on privately funded travel; strong revolving door restrictions; and expanded public disclosure of lobbyist activities.

Stated simply, these reforms are needed and they are needed now to restore the American public's faith in the integrity of their government as well as their elected representatives.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of what's at stake.

Ethics is woven into the very fabric of how our government does business. And ethics reform goes to the very heart of our democracy, to the public trust and respect that's essential to the health of our constitutional system.

Recent scandals have cast a shadow over the legitimacy of the laws and policies that come out of Washington. The American public's receding faith in the integrity of our legislative process means that ethics reform is now central to every public issue that we will consider—whether it's energy policy, or health care reform, tax policy, or even homeland security.

The ability of Congress to deal credibly and forthrightly with these other issues depends on reforming our own ethical rules.

The long-term challenges that we face in this country are enormous. They include high energy prices and a growing dependence on foreign oil; health care costs that have spiraled out of control; global warming that threatens the future of our environment and our economy; a mounting national debt; and a growing middle class squeeze.

I believe that there are solutions to these challenges. We can achieve energy independence by investing smart and having some guts to take on the oil companies. We can get this country back on the right fiscal track, and move forward to more affordable health care. We can deliver much-needed and long overdue relief to the middle class. These are the things that the people of Minnesota sent me to Washington to fight for.

The people of Minnesota also sent me here because they have not yet seen the bold change of direction that we need to make these solutions happen. Instead, they have seen a Washington where the rules are tilted against them and where the interests of well-connected lobbyists come at the expense of the interests of the middle class.

When our energy policy is drafted in secret meetings with the oil companies, we all end up paying more at the pump because they've failed to invest in renewable energy. When our health care legislation is written by the drug companies, we all pay more because they've banned negotiation on prices. The people of this country know corruption when they see it and they saw last November who was benefiting and who was getting hurt.

Business as usual doesn't only generate bad policy and wasteful spending. It also erodes public trust in the integrity of our government institutions, our elected leaders, and the law-making process itself. We the American people know what we want from Washington. It is this: a government that's focused on doing what's best for our nation, and on securing a better and more prosperous future for the people.

This reform legislation gets us there. By passing this legislation, we will make a positive difference in how Congress performs its duties—and these reforms will send a strong, clear message to the American people that we are here for them and focused solely on representing their interests.

And that's the way it should be.

FDA REAUTHORIZATION BILLS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as my colleagues know, the Senate passed S. 1082, the FDA Revitalization Act, on May 9 by a near-unanimous vote. The House passed its version of this legislation, H.R. 2900, the FDA Amendments Act, on July 11, also by a near-unanimous vote. Staff of the Senate HELP Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee has worked many, many hours a day, 7 days a week, to get to a bipartisan, bicameral agreement on the FDA reauthorization bills.

Working together with Senator ENZI, we have already made a great deal of progress. We have reached agreement or near agreement on several titles and have narrowed the gap on most others. Important issues remain to be resolved, but we will do the work we need to do to have an agreement for the House and Senate to consider in September.

I thank our majority leader, Senator REID, for his leadership and support throughout this process and for making this important legislation an early priority in the Senate. While we were unable to appoint conferees today, our bipartisan deliberations will continue through August, and I hope we can name conferees in September and finalize this legislation that is so important to the safety and health of all Americans.

I also commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, from both the House and Senate. They have a deep knowledge of the issues presented by these bills and have been strong advocates of different positions on some of the issues. I believe this process has improved the legislation and will con-

tinue to do so and that it will produce an FDA reauthorization bill that the House and Senate can again endorse with broad, bipartisan support.

DROUGHT IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the farmers in my State of Delaware, and those in other parts of the Nation, who are looking out their windows and seeing the damage caused by a drought. This is the time of year when corn is at its best, at its sweetest, but in Delaware, specifically in Sussex and Kent Counties, where agriculture is king, my guys are in trouble. On some farms, corn is half the size it should be, brown and withered, stalks, with no ears of corn. Losses, I have been told, are 50 percent of the crop or even 100 percent of a farmers total crop. Soybeans are also in jeopardy. And we are facing a forecast with little or no rain.

As I have been telling my colleagues, for more than three decades, agriculture is an enormous and vital part of my State. Delaware is an agricultural State. Almost 50 percent of our total acreage is farmland. Sussex County, the southernmost county in my State, is the largest poultry producing county in the entire country. Delaware is first in production value per farm and first in cash receipts per acre. We are ranked No. 2 in lima bean production, and we have 200,000 acres of soybeans and 175,000 acres of corn.

Sadly, this is not the first time that my State has faced a severe drought. In 2002, our farmers faced similar circumstances and suffered major losses. When a severe drought strikes, the impact on the economy, the environment, and the agricultural sector can be devastating. USDA's assistance during these crucial periods help the livelihoods of our farmers in Delaware.

Farmers, always at the mercy of the weather, are constantly faced with decisions of how to best manage risk. With Delaware soil, irrigation is oftentimes an option, but it is an expensive one which can be daunting to a farmer trying to make a profit. Another tool which farmers look to is crop insurance. Throughout my tenure in the Senate, I have supported incentives to make such tools attractive and affordable to farmers.

Bur for now, our Governor has started the process that triggers Federal assistance by calling for the Delaware Farm Service Agency to survey the crops. Because it is essential that the State, or specific counties, be designated as crop disaster areas to make farmers eligible for Federal disaster assistance, I am hopeful that they complete the process soon. If disaster assistance is needed, I hope the Secretary of Agriculture will move swiftly to help.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I seek recognition today to engage in a colloquy with a number of colleagues who have been true leaders on one of the most challenging issues facing the world today climate change.

As I stated on the floor several weeks ago, the time for action is now. According to the latest scientific findings of our world's leading experts—the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the confidence that humans are altering earth's climate has reached 90 percent certainty.

It is with this sense of urgency that I recently introduced, along with Senator SPECTER, the Low Carbon Economy Act of 2007. S. 1766—which is also supported by Senators AKAKA, MURKOWSKI, CASEY, STEVENS, and HARKIN—is the product of over 2 years of deliberation and analysis and enjoys the support of many in industry, labor and conservation.

Senator SPECTER and I are convinced—and I believe my good colleagues from Connecticut and Virginia would agree—that legislation can only attract the bipartisan support needed to put the United States on a path to a low carbon economy if it contains the following: No. 1. mandatory limits on U.S. greenhouse gas emissions; No. 2, an economy-wide approach that meets the economic test of “no significant harm”; No. 3. increased incentives to accelerate the development and deployment of low and zero emission technologies; No. 4. measures that strongly encourage our major trading partners to begin reducing emissions and that balance U.S. emission-reduction commitments with the necessity of engaging other countries; and No. 5. measures to allocate allowances under the program equitably and efficiently.

Ultimately I am optimistic about our ability to forge bipartisan resolution of all of these issues because there is now such broad agreement within this body and within the business community and the general public about the need for real progress and action on this issue. At the same time, I recognize that we have work left to do. Senator SPECTER and I today hosted a meeting among many of the Nation's leading power producers to explore some new ideas for allocating emission permits within the power sector. We were encouraged by this discussion and plan to broaden the discussion to include a wider array of consumer and environmental perspectives.

While the legislation we have introduced and the outline you are sharing today differ in some important respects, I believe that we have a great deal in common. Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator WARNER, I stand ready to work to address our differences in the interest in forging a broad consensus capable of passing legislation this year.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the Senator from New Mexico, for the enormous contribution his efforts have made to move the climate change debate forward. He has