

people of Minneapolis, I say thank you for the support you have shown and the spirit in which you have come together.

At times, there is so much rancor in our Nation today—this partisan divide. It is so uplifting to be in this Chamber to see my colleagues on both sides of the aisle come together, and so I say thank you.

Let me end by asking that we not forget there has been a great tragedy; that lives have been lost. Let us keep the families of those who have lost loved ones in our prayers. Let us make sure we continue in the effort to ensure that the resources are there to rebuild, and let us do it quickly. Let us do those things to expedite the process. This is a major thoroughfare, a major piece of the transportation system in the State of Minnesota. We need to get the money back to Minnesota and get the people on the ground who can get the work done.

We can do it, and we can do it quickly. We will rebuild this bridge, we will rebuild quickly, we will find out what caused this terrible, terrible tragedy, and we will keep those who have suffered loss in our prayers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE STATUS FOR LIBERIANS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me first begin by commending Senators COLEMAN and KLOBUCHAR for their very aggressive and appropriate response to a crisis in their home State of Minnesota. We were proud, all of us, to join with the Senators in helping their people in the face of great need.

This is interesting, because I rise for the moment to speak about another measure which both Senator COLEMAN and Senator KLOBUCHAR have joined with me as cosponsors of, and that is the temporary protective status for Liberians. The Presiding Officer, Senator WHITEHOUSE, is also a cosponsor, along with Senators KERRY and LEAHY. It is a bipartisan measure. It is in response to a situation where there are thousands of Liberians here legally, but they are in danger of being deported because their status could change by October 1.

The House of Representatives earlier this week passed unanimously by voice vote H.R. 3123, which would extend for 1 year their temporary protected status. In fact, the minority leader, Mr. BLUNT, was the key leader in this effort, along with our colleague from Rhode Island, Congressman PATRICK KENNEDY, and I again thank Senators COLEMAN and KLOBUCHAR, and all the cosponsors.

The Liberian individuals we are talking about were in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s when a brutal civil war broke out in Liberia. They could not go home, and this country granted them protective status. That status, in one form or another, has been continued for now almost 15,

16 years. There are many families of Liberians in this country whose children are American citizens—in fact, who are about on the verge of college or even older.

Today, Liberia has made some progress. It has a democratically elected president. She is a remarkable woman, leading her nation. But, still, it is not a country that is ready to accept individuals who are in the United States, who are part of our community, who have American children, and who are contributing to our communities. We should, I think, give them the opportunity to make a choice of whether they should stay here or go back to their homeland of Liberia.

Every year they face a precipice that comes on October 1, when they worry whether their status will be extended; when they worry whether they will have to leave children behind, give up their jobs, leave their community and be lifted up, literally, to go back to a country which is, quite frankly, not ready to accept them and to use their talents. So each year we have been able to, either through administrative decision or through our efforts here, extend their stay. I urge that my colleagues consider taking up H.R. 3123, and I requested on behalf of my cosponsors a unanimous consent to do that. I am told that on the Democratic side there were no objections, but, apparently, there are some objections on the other side. I want to make it clear to all my colleagues I will renew this request time and time again when we return in September.

We have to act before October 1. It would be unfair, unjust, and unwise not to grant this exemption. It was accepted on a bipartisan basis overwhelmingly in the other body, and I think we should do the same here in the Senate. I urge any of my colleagues who have questions—and I think at this juncture there are many who might have legitimate questions—please, I would be happy to answer them. I would be happy to respond. I believe I can make a compelling case that in terms of fairness, in terms of equity, in terms of recognizing what these individuals have done to contribute to communities all across this country, they should be granted at least 1 more year. This is not a permanent adjustment, this is an additional year.

Let me stress one thing also. We have had a great deal of discussion in this Congress about immigration. These individuals are legally here in the United States, and they have been given the opportunity to work, they pay taxes, and they are not qualified for any social benefits. I am very proud of Rhode Island because we have a large community, relatively speaking, and they have become extraordinarily productive members of our community. So I feel very strongly, and I know my colleague, the Presiding Officer, does, that we are going to do all we can over the several weeks before October 1 to make sure this is adopted; that we follow the

other body in doing so. I don't want anyone to mistake my objection to other provisions that are going forward. I am sincerely committed to getting this done. I hope we get it done, and I thank the Presiding Officer for his cosponsorship and leadership.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, the Senator from Rhode Island has been so persuasive in his argument, I ask that he add me as a cosponsor to the bill.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator be added as a cosponsor.

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

The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, both our colleagues from Minnesota have left the floor, but I join with my colleague from Rhode Island and others here in expressing our regrets and our condolences to the people of Minnesota for the tragedy that State has gone through with the collapse of the highway over the Mississippi River. Certainly all of us extend our sympathies to those who lost loved ones and those who were injured. We in Congress will do whatever we can to help out in that situation, as all of us have at one time or another stood in this Chamber and asked for help for our States because of a tragedy that has occurred. It is very much in keeping with the tradition of this body to respond to tragedies such as the one Minnesota has experienced.

I want to take a moment, however, and urge my colleagues during the next few weeks to consider an important bill to try to address the growing problem of deteriorating infrastructure across our nation. For nearly 2 years, the Senator from Nebraska and I, Senator HAGEL, have been working on this bill, along with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Felix Rohatyn, who has been very involved in the issues of New York City, and our former Senate colleagues Warren Rudman and Bob Kerrey.

The numbers are staggering. There are some 160,000 bridges of the 900,000 in our country that are deficient, to put it mildly. We saw what happened in Minnesota. There are 614 transit systems in deep need of repair. One-third of all our highways are in need of significant repair and improvement. The water systems and wastewater systems in the United States are, on average, almost 100 years old. Clearly, the ability of our appropriations process to maintain the needed infrastructure for our country is inadequate. We all know that. So we have spent time over the last 2, 2½ years working with people on Wall Street and others to come up with ideas on how we might attract capital to the area of infrastructure development.

Ironically, we had talked about delaying this announcement until September, but at the suggestion of Senator HAGEL, we decided Wednesday morning to make the announcement before we left for the August break. I think we had four members of the press in the gallery to cover the initial announcement of this year-and-a-half long effort. And of course by 5 or 6 o'clock that afternoon, we had heard the news of what happened in Minneapolis, which heightened the country's awareness of a problem that was well-known to those of us looking into this over the years.

This should never have happened in the United States. We have been successful over the years because we have understood the relationship of strong infrastructure systems, wastewater treatment systems, highways, bridges, and transit systems, to our ability to grow economically. Of course, some of the major efforts that have increased the prosperity of our country have been big ideas in infrastructure. Certainly the interstate highway system, under Dwight Eisenhower, is a classic example of a project that dramatically improved the economy of our Nation more than 50 years ago.

At any rate, there are a number of examples, and I hope my colleagues will look at this critically important legislation we have presented for their consideration. We look forward to further examining how better to deal with the large problems facing us when we reconvene this fall. As many of my colleagues may know, a \$1 billion investment, whether public or private money, would generate as many as 40,000 jobs. So, in addition to addressing major deficiencies in our infrastructure, it will also spur economic development and provide needed work for those in the construction fields and trades.

Again, this is an important issue, and one that is unfortunately receiving more attention than it would otherwise, except for the tragedy in Minnesota. In my home State of Connecticut, we went through a similar tragedy, as my colleague from Rhode Island may recall, on Route 95 along the Mianus River, the corridor running through his State and mine, down to Florida. A whole section of that road in western Connecticut collapsed. Four people lost their lives on that day when the Mianus River bridge fell. So we relate to and understand what has happened in Minnesota.

Again, our invitation is to take a look at this. It is an idea, a big idea, a large idea, creatively financed to be able to do something serious about this growing problem. It is a problem we are going to be hearing more and more about if we fail to take the necessary steps to improve this infrastructure. We must work to construct what needs to be constructed and put our feet back on the ground.

I thank my colleagues.

I am going to make some unanimous consent requests here.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 327

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 327 and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. Reserving the right to object, the Senator from Connecticut is going to put forward a number of unanimous-consent requests. Because of the lateness of the hour, we have a number of Members on our side who, on many of these unanimous-consent requests that he will propound, have concerns about those, and so they have not been cleared on this side. I am going to object to this and to some of the others he will be putting forward.

I object.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 1538

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if the Senate receives the message from the House on H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior bill, with a request for a conference, the Senate agree to the request and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. Reserving the right to object on this, this bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent. This is something everybody on our side supports. It includes a pay raise for members of our military. But again, until such time as we receive this message from the House—at that time, I guess I will ask the majority to renew that request. Until that happens, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1257

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 257, S. 1257, a bill to provide the District of Columbia a voting seat and the State of Utah an additional seat in the House of Representatives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 3159

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives from the House H.R. 3159, the Dwell Time Act, the bill be considered as having been read three times,

passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 742

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 321, S. 742, that the committee-reported amendment be considered and agreed to, the bill as amended be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table and any statements be printed in the RECORD as if read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1785

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 320, S. 1785, that the committee-reported amendment be considered and agreed to, the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 558

Mr. DODD. Last, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 93, S. 558, that the amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, the committee-reported substitute as amended be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and that any statements relating thereto be printed in the RECORD with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DODD. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SIX POINT PLAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 7 months ago I opened this session by reminding myself and my colleagues that