

women, who are unemployed through no fault of their own—the plant picks up and goes to Mexico, goes to China, goes someplace else. This is not their fault. They want to work. They are great workers. They are going to continue to find a way to work. But to hold them as pawns at this time is shameful.

So, Mr. President, I am being told there is going to be a Republican objection. I received a note to that effect. I am told there is no one here who is able to object at this time. But due to the courtesies of the Senate, I will not ask, although I am very tempted, I have to tell you—but due to the courtesies involved in the Senate, and the rules of the Senate, I will not proceed to ask for unanimous consent because, in fact, I have received a notice that the Republicans will, in fact, be objecting one more time, one more time, one more time to our ability to support and help working men and women and their families for the next 3 months.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

EXTENDING AIP CONTRACT AUTHORITY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Congress is currently considering proposals to extend contract authority for the Airport Improvement Program, which is known as AIP. If lawmakers—that is us—are unable to reach an agreement and fail to pass legislation extending contract authority before Congress adjourns for the year—that will be in a few minutes—the funding for critical safety, security, and capacity projects at airports throughout the country will be delayed.

The omnibus does not contain any funding authority from the aviation trust to pay for airport grants. The short-term extension includes such funding authority for 6 months and has formula changes that allow the Department of Transportation to run the program with only half a year's funding. If the separate FAA extension isn't passed, the Department will not be able to make any grants to airports.

Lack of contract authority for the Airport Improvement Program grants would cause significant impact. Unless rectified through authorization, the program would lose a construction season for airports that have had to bid contracts early due to winter weather for work in the spring and summer.

Delaying these funds would be particularly hard on small airports that rely on this funding as the primary source of revenue for infrastructure projects and those airports in parts of

the country with short construction cycles.

Since Congress has been unable to pass a multiyear Federal Aviation Administration authorization bill, airports are urging Congress to pass legislation that will extend the authority through the end of March for a total of 6 months of funding.

Extending this contract authority through the end of March would provide airports with more than \$1.8 billion in AIP funds. Extending the AIP contract authority through the end of March will allow the FAA to fully fund the Letter of Intent Program, which provides funding for critical infrastructure projects at major commercial airports around the country.

It was my intention to ask unanimous consent to pass S. 2530, the Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act for 2007, which was introduced earlier. It is my understanding that there would be a Republican objection, so, sadly, I will withhold asking for that consent.

I am disappointed that this is not going to be able to go forward. There are many airports around the country, airports in Pennsylvania, and I am sure in Nevada and other parts of the country that, simply will be unable to do what they need to do for the people who are so dependent on them, especially these rural airports.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, another month has passed, and more American troops lost their lives overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is only right that we take time in the Senate to honor them.

Since last memorializing the names of our fallen troops on November 16, the Pentagon has announced the deaths of 39 troops. They lost their lives in Iraq and in Operation Enduring Freedom, which includes Afghanistan. They will not be forgotten. Today I submit their names into the RECORD:

PFC Juctin R. P. McDaniel, of Andover, NH
SGT Austin D. Pratt, of Cadet, MO
PVT Daren A. Smith, of Helena, MT
SFC Jonathan A. Lowery, of Houlton, ME
SSG Michael J. Gabel, of Crowley, LA
CPL Joshua C. Blaney, of Matthews, NC
SGT Samuel E. Kelsey, of Troup, TX
SPC Brynn J. Naylor, of Roswell, NM
CPO Mark T. Carter, of Fallbrook, CA
SSG Gregory L. Elam, of Columbus, GA
CPL Tanner J. O'Leary, of Eagle Butte, SD
CPL Johnathan A. Lahmann, of Richmond, IN

SPC Randy W. Pickering, of Bovey, MN
SGT Eric J. Hernandez, of Waldwick, NJ
PVT Dewayne L. White, of Country Club Hills, IL
CPT Adam P. Snyder, of Fort Pierce, FL
SGT Kyle Dayton, of El Dorado Hills, CA
SGT Blair W. Emery, of Lee, ME
SPC Matthew K. Reece, of Harrison, AR
SFC John J. Tobiason, of Bloomington, MN
CPL Allen C. Roberts, of Arcola, IL
PVT Isaac T. Cortes, of Bronx, NY
SPC Benjamin J. Garrison, of Houston, TX
SSG Jonathon L. Martin, of Bellevue, OH
SPC Melvin L. Henley, Jr., of Jackson, MS
SGT Alfred G. Paredes, Jr., of Las Vegas, NV

PFC Marius L. Ferrero, of Miami, FL
CPL Jason T. Lee, of Fruitport, MI
CPL Christopher J. Nelson, of Rochester, WA
2LT Peter H. Burks, of Dallas, TX
SSG Alejandro Ayala, of Riverside, CA
SGT Steven C. Ganczewski, of Niagara Falls, NY

SGT Mason L. Lewis, of Gloucester, VA
SGT Kenneth R. Booker, of Vevay, IN
2LT Stuart F. Liles, of Hot Springs, AR
SPC Ashley Sietsema, of Melrose Park, IL
CPT David A. Boris, of PA
SPC Adrian E. Hike, of Callender, IA
SGT Derek R. Banks, of Newport News, VA

We cannot forget these brave men and women and their sacrifice. These brave souls left behind parents and children, siblings, and friends; we want them to know the country pledges to preserve the memory of our lost soldiers, who paid the ultimate price, with the dignity they deserve.

FHA MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, last week, I was pleased to support passage of the FHA Modernization Act, S. 2338. This legislation will update the FHA program so that it once again is better able to provide many low-income and first-time homebuyers another option as they try to secure a mortgage for a new home or to refinance an existing mortgage under more affordable terms.

As some consumers experience credit tightening in the home mortgage and other financial markets, a byproduct of issues in the subprime mortgage market, the availability of stable financing alternatives is critically important to reducing the negative effects of the current market turmoil.

While the FHA Modernization Act is not a silver bullet, it represents a responsible step the federal government can take to benefit thousands of borrowers around the country.

Additionally, in the last several days Congress passed a measure, which I cosponsored, that encourages homeowners and their lenders to work out alternative payment plans that prevent individuals from losing their homes. The Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, H.R. 3648, will protect taxpayers from an IRS tax bill in the event they have a portion of their mortgage debt forgiven. Under current law, homeowners entering foreclosure or refinancing their mortgage at a lower loan value due to a drop in housing prices, face an unfair and unwarranted tax. The last thing someone struggling to stay in their home needs is a huge tax obligation on income that they never saw. I expect the President to sign this legislation into law in the coming days.

In addition to the legislation recently advanced by Congress, the Federal Reserve proposed a rule this week that would prohibit lenders from making so-called "no documentation" loans where a borrower's income or assets are not verified; prohibit lenders from engaging "in a pattern or practice" of lending without considering a borrower's ability to repay a loan; restrict prepayment penalties on certain

loans; and require lenders to establish escrow accounts for property taxes and homeowners insurance.

The proposed rule would also restrict “yield spread premiums” that exceed the amount a consumer had agreed to in advance; prohibit coercion of an appraiser to misrepresent the value of a home; prohibit certain deceptive advertising practices; and improve certain truth-in-lending disclosures.

While I look forward, as a member of the Banking Committee, to reviewing the Fed’s proposed regulations in the coming weeks, the committee should proceed cautiously as it considers more aggressive attempts to address current issues in the housing market. With the housing correction already under way and with the restricted credit availability that we are now experiencing, some of the proposals that have been floated may have the unintended consequence of exacerbating reduced credit availability at exactly the wrong time. Others may unnecessarily use taxpayer dollars to encourage unwise behavior in the future.

Any further legislation in this area needs to be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that it will have a positive effect on homeownership in this country, both now and in the future, and not simply rushed through Congress for the sake of political expediency.

One piece of legislation that the Senate Banking Committee should address as soon as possible is GSE reform. The House passed legislation earlier this year that strengthens the oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. With the ongoing difficulties in the housing market, now more than ever it is imperative that Congress act to guard against threats to our capital markets and to protect against any possible negative consequences for taxpayers that could arise without proper oversight of these institutions. Fannie and Freddie have had a number of problems over the past several years and are so centrally important to the mortgage market that any further problems could have serious repercussions that could spread throughout our financial markets.

The GSE’s regulator needs to be strengthened so that Fannie and Freddie can continue their important role in supporting the mortgage market. Any efforts to enhance their role in the mortgage market must not move forward until fundamental regulatory reform is enacted.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, last night I indicated my strong concerns about the omnibus appropriations bill, a bill that I expected to include all domestic spending as well as funding for the war in Iraq. Notably, I discussed my grave misgivings about funding for the President’s disastrous, ongoing and ill-conceived war. I also raised my unease with last-minute additions of

loan guarantees for questionable energy sources, such as the building of new nuclear power and for coal-related energy, especially coal to liquids.

Last night, I voted against an amendment to provide the President with a blank check for his war. Until even later in the evening, I thought that the war funding would be attached to the domestic spending legislation set for vote that evening. However, it was clear by the time of the domestic spending vote that the Iraq war funds were kept separate. I remain very concerned with the nuclear and coal loan guarantees that were inserted. I decided that, on balance, the domestic spending bill that would fund, among other important priorities, community health centers and health care for many Americans in need, deserved my support. I regret the insertion of the ill-conceived loan guarantees and will work with my colleagues to address them.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, the famous test pilot Chuck Yeager once said: “Any landing you can walk away from is a good one. But a perfect landing is one where you can fly the plane the next day.”

When it comes to homeland security, the Omnibus appropriations bill which Congress approved last night is a good landing in the sense that we can all go home for the recess having improved funding for the Department of Homeland Security over the President’s wholly inadequate budget request.

But it is not a perfect landing because it leaves some important initiatives stuck on the ground due to either a lack of funding or misplaced priorities.

First the good news: Overall the omnibus includes \$38.7 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, for fiscal year 2008, including \$2.7 billion in emergency funds for border security and other needs.

This is significant improvement over the President’s \$34.3 billion request, with the additional money going to help our first responders and State and local governments purchase equipment and receive the training they need to effectively respond to man-made or natural disasters; to better protect our ports and railways; to increase security on our borders and in our airports, and to confront the looming threat of terrorists attacking us at home with improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

Specifically, the bill includes \$950 million for FEMA’s State Homeland Security Grant Program, SHSGP—the full level authorized in the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, which Senator COLLINS and I authored. SHSGP grants provide critical support for prevention, planning and response efforts by State and local governments. They help fund training, exercises and equipment for our Nation’s first responders and support fusion centers that allow officials to share information that can prevent terrorist attacks.

The omnibus also includes a combined \$750 million for the assistance to firefighters grants and SAFER grants programs, both of which provide vital support to the nation’s courageous fire fighters.

Also, the emergency management performance grants program, which supports all-hazards planning and preparedness, received an increase of \$100 million over last year’s level for a total of \$300 million.

And a new interoperable communications grant program, included in the 911 implementation bill, will receive \$50 million in funding a positive step towards what I hope will be a greater commitment to provide dedicated funding for what is still the number one priority of state and local officials.

FEMA which is in the midst of a much needed transformation prescribed in the Post Katrina Emergency Management Act, which I also co-authored with Senator COLLINS also does well in the Omnibus, receiving \$724 million \$189 million above its fiscal year 2007 level. This includes an additional \$100 million for FEMA’s core operations programs, which are critical to the agency’s efforts to turn itself into a world-class response agency capable of leading our Nation in preparing for and responding to a catastrophe which it clearly was unable to do with Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Rail and transit security grants receive \$400 million, \$225 million above 2007. These much needed investments will help improve security in transportation modes which have been largely neglected, relative to airline security, even though terrorists have time and again demonstrated that they are primary targets.

Port security grants are funded at \$400 million as authorized by the SAFE Port Act \$190 million above last year’s level. The legislation also includes \$13 million for the secure freight initiative and global trade exchange programs—funding which will further help close another glaring weakness in our homeland defenses.

I am a vocal proponent of comprehensive immigration reform. This includes reforms to strengthen of our borders. The omnibus moves us closer to that goal.

The bill provides \$6.8 billion for Customs and Border Protection, CBP, to improve security at the borders, including funds to continue limited use of National Guard troops on the border and hire 3,000 additional border patrol agents.

The bill also provides \$1.2 billion for border security fencing to complete 370 miles by the end of fiscal year 2008 and almost \$15 million for additional unmanned aerial systems to patrol the border.

And the omnibus includes \$475 million for the U.S. VISIT program used to track the entry and exit of foreign