

This morning I challenged the chairman of that committee. I am still ranking member, but I challenged Chairman BOXER to hold such a hearing. Despite the EPW Committee's failure to conduct any oversight, by 2007 it had become increasingly clear that to double the RFS mandate into a shorter timeframe would prove reckless and premature. Yet many in Congress refuse to acknowledge the many warning signs.

The 2007 Energy bill mandated 36 million gallons of biofuels by 2022. Of this, 15 billion gallons are now required from corn-based ethanol by just 2015. Washington was abuzz last year with talk of energy independence, cutting our reliance on foreign sources of energy, increasing supplies of fuels, investing in biofuels, lowering the price of energy, especially prices at the pump—all fine goals. Yet this Congress's actions didn't meet its rhetoric. I believe a secure energy supply has to be grounded in three principles: stability, diversity, and affordability. Our policies have to promote domestic energy production, including oil, gas, nuclear, corn, as well as renewable fuels.

I have said this over and over. We need all of the above to meet the energy crisis in America. What the Democrats and the green movement failed to understand is environmental regulations are not free. They have a very real price. We should be producing more fuel at home. It is good for our security, good for jobs, good for consumers.

Working with Congressman FRANK LUCAS, I sponsored and secured Senate passage of the first national transitional assistance program to help farmers grow dedicated energy crops for cellulosic biofuels. This measure is vital to the development of cellulosic biofuels in the United States because it would encourage U.S. agricultural producers within a 50-mile radius of a cellulosic biorefinery to produce nonfood energy crops for clean burning fuel.

In addition, I am proud of the research taking place in my State of Oklahoma. It is being done by the Noble Foundation and its partners. By focusing on cellulosic ethanol, we can stimulate a biofuels industry that doesn't compete with other domestic agriculture. Since you can grow it all over the country—and that is not to be said about corn—you avoid the transportation problems of Midwest-focused ethanol. Cellulosic ethanol can increase both energy and economic security.

Washington has a long way to go to get energy policy right. The future of energy is going to require a wide variety of fuels and approaches. We all need to work together to achieve our common goals. The only way they can defeat us is to divide and conquer. We have seen examples of that recently. But we all need to work together. I call on all of my colleagues today to set aside our differences and work together for an abundant, secure, and environmentally sound energy policy.

It is worth repeating that when you have Lester Brown, Miles O'Brien, Dan Rather, Time magazine, New York Times, the United Nations, and JIM INHOFE all in agreement on changing an environmental policy, you can rest assured that the policy is horribly misguided. All of these publications and individuals now realize the pure folly of the Federal Government's current biofuel mandates. Once again, I call on Congress to revisit the enactment of this mandate.

Secondly, what we have to do—and I still am the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee which has jurisdiction over the EPA—is to call upon EPA to put a stop to the mandate now. It can be done while they are trying to determine what effect this has on our food supplies. The only way to do it is to stop the mandate while the review is taking place. People are starving to death because of this transfer from food to fuel.

As the ranking member of the EPW Committee, which has jurisdiction, I am going to ask for an immediate waiver to stop this mandate.

I yield the floor to my good friend from Kansas who agrees with everything I just said.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Kansas.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank my friend and colleague from Oklahoma.

Mr. President, I rise today in support of the bipartisan agreement reached by the Senate Finance and Commerce Committees on the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration Airport and Airway Trust Fund. In my view this agreement represents the true meaning of the word "compromise" and shows what is possible when we really roll up our sleeves and go to work. I have been working on this bill for 2 years. Reauthorizing the FAA and the Airport and Airway Trust Fund is not only a top national priority, but it is a top priority for my State of Kansas as well. Kansas and aviation have a long history together. Aircraft pioneers such as Lloyd Stearman, who happened to sell his company to Walter Boeing, Walter Beech, Clyde Cessna, E.M. Laird, Amelia Earhart, William Lear, and many others, all have close ties to Kansas. It was a team of Kansans that really created the first commercially produced airplane in the United States. It was called the Laird Swallow. This plane took flight in April of 1920, just 88 years and a few weeks ago. My, how far we have come.

Today, about 40,000 employees in Wichita and the surrounding counties make their living building planes, manufacturing parts, and servicing aviation. The aviation industry directly and indirectly supports over 140,000 jobs in Kansas—140,000 jobs—and will soon contribute roughly \$9 billion annually to our State's economy. That is not only significant, that is amazing.

Kansas is home to nearly 3,200 aviation and manufacturing businesses, including Cessna, Hawker-Beechcraft, Bombardier-Learjet, Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems, Garmin, and Honeywell, just to name a few. However, aviation is not simply an economic engine in Kansas, it is part of our history, our way of life, and, most importantly, part of our future. It is an example of our entrepreneurial spirit.

In late October of 2006, at my invitation, newly appointed Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters traveled to Kansas to see firsthand what the aviation industry means to our State. Congressman TODD TIAHRT and I joined the Secretary on a tour of Cessna's headquarters and manufacturing facility in Wichita to show the importance of general aviation—general aviation—to the Kansas economy. Cessna actually traces its roots back to Clyde Cessna who built his first plane in Rago, KS, in 1911.

The Secretary and I then traveled to Olathe, KS, to visit the Kansas City air traffic control center. There we spoke with the controllers and the trainees about their work, listened in as they actually directed traffic through the Kansas City airspace, making it possible for people to fly in safety.

During our visit, the Secretary heard firsthand from industry leaders about the importance of updating our air traffic control system, and that the current tax mechanisms provide the most appropriate avenue to raise the necessary funds to upgrade into what they call NextGen technology—next generation technology.

This key message was delivered to me and the Secretary personally, and I have been delivering that same message to my colleagues since this debate began some time ago. It is no secret that I care passionately about this issue and how general aviation is treated, and to make sure they are treated fairly. With my State's close connection to the history of this industry, obviously, you can see why.

Kansas manufactures—this may be unbelievable to some—Kansas manufactures roughly 70 percent of the world's general aviation aircraft—70 percent.

Throughout this debate, general aviation has been called to increase its contribution to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund to help pay for the modernization of our air traffic control system.

All along the way, general aviation has stepped to the plate and agreed to help pay for the necessary increases to move our aviation infrastructure into next generation technology.

I cannot recall a time when an industry has come to me and said: We want to help. We are willing to support an increase in our taxes to actually do so. But that is exactly what the general aviation community did. Their only request has been that they be able to pay through the current efficient and effective tax structure of the fuel tax. That was their only request.

The agreement finally reached between the Finance and Commerce Committees respects this request and allows general aviation to be part of the modernization solution without creating a new bureaucracy or additional redtape. The agreement would allow AvGas to remain at its current rate, but would increase the Jet A fuel tax from 21.8 cents to 36 cents per gallon on general aviation flights.

Now, this raises an additional \$250 million dedicated to updating the air traffic control technology that will increase safety and decrease congestion—something that is in the headlines every day. At the same time, our commercial airlines and passengers are held harmless from tax increases, given the challenges they face today.

I am pleased this agreement recognizes the value of both the commercial aviation and general aviation to our Nation's transportation system. I realize there have been strong feelings on both sides of this debate.

My goals, as we drafted this bill, were very clear: One, ensure that our air traffic control system is updated and remains safe for all passengers and aircraft; and, two, protect the general aviation community and Kansas jobs, which would have been threatened by something called a user fee.

Today, I am pleased to say we have succeeded on both counts. This legislation represents the best of bipartisan compromise in a real effort to make our skies safer. I am proud to be part of this compromise, as are the 40,000 workers employed in Kansas in aviation manufacturing.

Kansas has a long history of being the world's leader in aviation achievements. This agreement guarantees that Kansas and our great general aviation industry will remain leaders in the sky. Kansas is—always has been—and remains the air capital of the world under this agreement. I thank my colleagues for helping us reach an agreement that will maintain our world standing.

Also included in this agreement is a fix to the projected funding deficit in the highway trust fund for 2009. This 1-year patch will keep necessary transportation construction projects on schedule and help our State transportation departments meet their financial obligations.

I am hopeful the Senate will continue to work in the spirit of bipartisanship on the bill so we can quickly move to a conference committee and eventually have a bill signed into law before the current program expires.

We must do this. American travelers and businesses and pilots deserve the predictability and stability that comes with passing this bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I believe Senator CASEY wishes to address the Senate. I yield to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Kansas.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 516, 519 through 524, 526 through 536, 542 through 564, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Foreign Service, Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table en bloc; that no further motions be in order; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and that the Senate resume legislative session; that any statements relating to any of these nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Rebecca A. Gregory, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas for the term of four years.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Patricia M. Haslach, of Oregon, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as United States Senior Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum.

Joxel Garcia, of Connecticut, to be Representative of the United States on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization.

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION, UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Samuel W. Speck, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner on the part of the United States on the International Joint Commission, United States and Canada.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Scot A. Marciel, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Affairs.

Yousif Boutrous Ghafari, of Michigan, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Slovenia.

Kurt Douglas Volker, of Pennsylvania, a Career Foreign Service Officer of Class One, to be United States Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Robert J. Callahan, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Nicaragua.

Heather M. Hodges, of Ohio, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Ecuador.

Barbara J. Stephenson, of Florida, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Panama.

William Edward Todd, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Brunei Darussalam.

Hugo Llorens, of Florida, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Honduras.

Nancy E. McEldowney, of Florida, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria.

Stephen George McFarland, of Texas, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guatemala.

Peter E. Cianchette, of Maine, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Frank Charles Urbancic, Jr., of Indiana, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cyprus.

Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Robert G. McSwain, of Maryland, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for the term of four years.

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Bruce A. Litchfield

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be major general

Brigadier General C. D. Alston
Brigadier General Brooks L. Bash
Brigadier General Michael J. Basla
Brigadier General Paul F. Capasso
Brigadier General Floyd L. Carpenter
Brigadier General David J. Eichhorn
Brigadier General Gregory A. Feest
Brigadier General Burton M. Field
Brigadier General Randal D. Fullhart
Brigadier General Bradley A. Heithold
Brigadier General Ralph J. Jodice, II
Brigadier General Duane A. Jones
Brigadier General Frank J. Kisner
Brigadier General Jay H. Lindell
Brigadier General Darren W. McDew
Brigadier General Christopher D. Miller
Brigadier General Harold W. Moulton, II
Brigadier General Stephen P. Mueller
Brigadier General Ellen M. Pawlikowski
Brigadier General Paul G. Schafer
Brigadier General Stephen D. Schmidt
Brigadier General Michael A. Snodgrass
Brigadier General Mark S. Solo

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Dana T. Atkins