

for this country. In order to do that we have to continue with the tax incentives for solar and wind. But we have had eight votes on it, and eight times the other side has blocked us in providing the incentives to provide dramatic new approaches for renewable energy. It makes no sense to me.

We said in 1916 that we want you to go looking for oil, and in fact we want you to look for oil and gas sufficiently that we will give you big tax breaks as you look and find oil and gas. So we put tax incentives in place. I wasn't here, of course, but we put tax policies in place nearly a century ago to say look for oil and gas and we will give you big tax breaks. Now, let's look at what we did for renewable energy. We put in place in 1992, 16 years ago, tax incentives for wind and solar and other renewable energy. They were short-term, fairly shallow tax incentives. They have been extended, short term, five times, and they have been allowed to expire three times. It is a pathetic response.

Even now, the current incentives die at the end of this year. They expire. We tried eight times to renew them and so far we have been blocked. Why? Because some of our colleagues are upset that one of the ways we pay for those is to shut down the tax scam being used by hedge fund managers to move their income through tax haven countries in something called deferred compensation to avoid paying even the minimal compensation to the Federal Government in taxes that they now pay. They get to pay already some of the lowest tax rates in America, at 15 percent, which I think makes no sense. But even so, many of them are trying to avoid U.S. taxes by using deferred compensation techniques to run it through offshore tax havens.

Our colleagues on the other side are so protective of that and believe, apparently, they should be able to continue doing that. They appear willing to shut down our ability to extend the tax credits for renewable energy in the long term for this country.

The plea for a little cooperation runs both ways around here. When I took the floor this morning, we had several colleagues talking about an interest in cooperation. I think there ought to be a lot of cooperation on everything. Let's start first with something that is going to shut down on December 31 of this year, and that is the incentives to continue and be more aggressive on developing renewable, homegrown energy, which reduces our need for foreign oil. Let us at least start to do that.

Mr. President, I believe my colleague is here to take the remaining portion of our time, so let me at this point yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as I understand it, we are about to run out of time for morning business; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We have 6 minutes 40 seconds.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business until 11:15 a.m.

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

ENERGY AND THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I note that Senator MURRAY will be coming, and I am hopeful she will arrive shortly and then I will yield, after 5 minutes, my remaining time.

Senator DORGAN is very eloquent on the issue of energy and the issue of renewables. We have no more excuses. How many filibusters do we have to have around this place before we get the other side to relent?

In my State, we are on the cutting edge of alternative energies. We have part of our coastline that is drilled upon, but part of it is preserved because it supports a very robust tourist and recreation industry. So we have found a balance in our State. But we are going to lose a lot of momentum if we don't get on with at least going after the speculators and renewing these important tax breaks to alternative energies, and also, if I might say, tell the oil companies they need to drill.

Mr. President, I note Senator MURRAY has come to the floor, and I want to inform her that I took 15 minutes and I am going to take 5 and leave her 10, if that is all right with her, unless she needs more time.

All right. So, Mr. President, if you will tell me when 5 minutes has expired from this point.

I am so pleased Senator MURRAY has come to the floor. She works so hard to fund the transportation priorities of our Nation over in the Appropriations Committee, and my work is at the Environment and Public Works Committee, where we authorize the highway bill every 5 years.

We know today, because we have been informed by Secretary of Transportation Peters, that there is a dangerous shortfall in the Federal fund that helps our States pay for critical highway construction. We have tried to fix this problem many times—unfortunately, without the help of the Bush administration. Now we get an SOS: Thursday they are going to start reducing the funds to the States.

Happily, they have awakened to the reality, but, unhappily, they have not talked to Republican Senators because last night, when Senator REID tried to solve this problem so we can keep our construction going, keep our funds flowing to the States, there was an objection from the Republican side. Mind you, we are talking about an \$8 billion sum of money that was taken from the fund years ago—in 1992, I believe it was; is that right? Or later than that? I am sorry, 1998. We borrowed \$8 billion

from the trust fund. Now all we are saying is we need to pay it back so we can make sure we can continue to build these important highways, fix our bridges, and help our transit systems. The fact is, if we do not do this, we are looking at tens of thousands, if not millions, of jobs lost.

Mr. President, I know you come from a State that is struggling economically, desperately needing change. I come from a State that is in a recession. We have horrible problems. The housing bust has affected us, and what is keeping us going, frankly, are solar energy projects, the wind energy projects, the highway projects. If, in fact, the Republicans continue to stand in the way of replenishing the highway trust fund, my State will be in big trouble. What will happen is that funds that were set aside for my State for important projects will not be forthcoming. My State of California, with more than 35 million people, receives more than \$3 billion for Federal funding for highways per year. According to the California Department of Transportation, if no action is taken to avert the shortfall, California would experience a potential revenue reduction of \$930 million. We are talking almost \$1 billion to my State.

California is not alone. My Republican colleagues who come here and say: No, don't worry, forget it, who cares—I don't hear one word about any trouble spending American taxpayer dollars overseas. I never heard one of them say: We are spending \$5,000 a second in Iraq on the war, let's bring some of that home—oh, no. But they are willing to make our people suffer here at home.

Enough is enough is enough. The other day, the President announced he is sending \$1 billion to Georgia. For a minute, I thought: Gee, Atlanta is in need of some help. Oh, no, it is the country of Georgia. Why? They had a war, as we all know, and we are compassionate toward them. But the war cost them \$1 billion. I ask rhetorically, are there countries in Europe that can help the country of Georgia? I don't mind doing our part. We say we had nothing to do with the war that started there. We are certainly angry at Russia for the way it responded to the incursion of Georgian troops. We believe it was overkill. We all agree on that. We all want to help. But \$1 billion to the country of Georgia while Atlanta, GA, and Los Angeles, CA, and all our other cities and towns and States are struggling and suffering and losing jobs? Enough is enough.

I am going to work with my colleague and my dear friend, Senator MURRAY, who is such a leader on the funding of these programs we painstakingly authorize every 5 years. We are going to be on this floor as often as we can to move this, to ask unanimous consent. We will let our Republican friends know. This is not a sneak attack. We are not going to do it when they are not aware of it. We are going

to move to fix this problem every day, maybe several times a day, until our Republican friends relent.

I have used the 5 minutes. This is just the start of a battle I am happy to be engaged in on behalf of the American people.

I yield my time to Senator MURRAY, the remaining 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California for coming and talking about an absolutely critical issue this Congress should be focused on like a laser beam, and that is the issue of our highway funding for construction projects across this country and the highway trust fund. I and my Democratic colleagues have been telling the Bush administration repeatedly that we face a looming disaster across this Nation. We have proposed a solution that would enable this trust fund to stay solvent. We have warned that without action this year, we are going to face a financial disaster. We warned that it was coming very fast. But, as we have seen with a lot of problems in this country this year, President Bush and our Republican colleagues have, unfortunately, chosen to hide their heads in the sand and just avoid the problem. They told us earlier this year that the trust fund would have more than \$3 billion in the bank at the end of this month. They have worked to block our proposed solution.

I rise today because last Friday, President Bush's Transportation Secretary, Mary Peters, finally acknowledged what we have been warning about for months now, and that is that the highway account of our highway trust fund is broke. The administration has taken a closer look at the real receipts they are getting in from the Federal gas tax and discovered that their estimates have been off by some \$3 billion just since May. The Bush administration is now preparing to default on its bills to every one of our States. Right now, instead of reimbursing our States twice a day, as the Federal Government has always done, Secretary Peters has told the States that they are only going to get paid now once a week. That is happening right now in every State in this country.

This coming Thursday, 2 days from now, may be the last time the Federal Government will be able to reimburse 100 percent of their expenses. The Department of Transportation has told my Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee that on Thursday, September 18—just 9 days from now—reimbursements could drop to as little as 64 percent of the funds that our States are due. They will have to offer our States an IOU for the rest of that money. The result of the administration's failure to act on this is that we are now faced, in this country, across every single State, with an emergency situation. If we do not pass a solution very fast right here in the

Senate, our States, every one of them, are going to be forced to cancel critical highway construction and repair projects that are ongoing right now that ensure our roads and our bridges are safe and secure.

Not only does this threaten the safety of our transportation infrastructure, it could bring about massive layoffs in the construction sector in this country. That is an area of our economy that has suffered one of the biggest hits in recent months, and this is going to have a huge impact across the country.

As we all know, this news is coming just as the unemployment rate has now reached the highest it has been in nearly 5 years. We are talking about a scenario in which ongoing highway projects could be stopped dead in their tracks if we do not take action in the next day or two. Across the country, thousands upon thousands of workers are going to be told to go home and not to come to work the next morning. These are critical safety and congestion relief projects that are ongoing right now across the country, and they could be halted—by the way, right in the heart of the construction season.

Fortunately, we do have a solution. It is ready to go, if only the Republicans would put their partisan ideology aside just for this event and work with us to get this passed. Earlier this year, we proposed returning, as the Senator from California talked about, \$8 billion that was taken out of the highway trust fund back in 1998. Contrary to what some people have said about our proposal, it is not a bailout from the general fund of the Treasury. That \$8 billion was collected from gas taxes for the purpose of being deposited into the highway trust fund. At the end of 1998, that money was taken from the trust fund because at the time the fund was flush and we didn't think we needed it. We definitely need it now, so we have proposed restoring to the trust fund the \$8 billion that was borrowed and not a penny more. All the money that was borrowed, we propose putting it back into the highway trust fund.

This situation is extremely serious. After months of blocking our legislative solution, the Bush administration did a 180 and is now asking all of us please to get this bill on the President's desk by the end of this week. You would think that would be enough for his Republican allies. You would think they would finally see how dire this problem is and work with us to avoid the thousands of layoffs that are coming across the country if we do not act. Instead, last night, as we saw, they blocked our efforts to bring this bill to the floor and get it to the President.

Senator BOND and I—he is my ranking member on the Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee—included this proposed transfer in our Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill this year. Democrats tried to press this pro-

posal in June, in fact, as part of the FAA bill. Democrats included it in the tax extender package. We were blocked. We tried to pass it as part of the stimulus bill. We were blocked. We have seen this blocked by Republicans at every turn as this crisis has gotten larger and larger. Now it is on us.

The final effort we needed was just 60 votes. Do you know how many we got? We got 51. Only 5 Republicans voted to move that bill forward, while 42 Republican Senators voted against it. Now we are here in a crisis mode. But we have another chance, a final chance. The House has passed a similar bill by a 10-to-1 margin. It is not partisan over there. They know the emergency. That bill is here in the Senate. We could pass it by unanimous consent today. But, as we saw last night, Republicans are blocking it.

We literally cannot afford to tread water like this. I came to the floor yesterday to urge my Republican colleagues to see how important this legislation is. We are here again today making the case. I hope our colleagues across the aisle will listen and work with us. The obstruction and failure to take action has now gotten our country into a crisis, and we do not need another one. We have a housing and mortgage crisis. We have an economic crisis. We cannot afford, in this country right now, to have a transportation construction crisis in every one of our cities and communities across the country.

Within just a few days—take note—we are going to be seeing consequences across the country. This Thursday, as I said, could be the last day our States will be fully reimbursed by the Federal Government for the construction work that is ongoing. By this time next week, States are going to have to start doing without.

The stakes could not be higher. Mr. President, 84,000 jobs in this country were lost last month alone. We cannot put another American job at risk, and we cannot afford to play Russian roulette with our country's highway construction effort. That is what is happening right now. We have to act. We need to act now. I plead with our Republican colleagues, put your partisanship aside. When it comes to our country's safety, infrastructure, construction jobs, economy—all at risk—can we take care of that today, please? Can we move forward and fix this emergency that is upon us?

Mrs. BOXER. If the Senator will yield, I would like to engage in a colleague.

I ask for an additional 10 minutes.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, the reason I want to engage my friend in a colloquy—I know she has other important hearings and so on—is I want to be specific here. I have just looked at a chart of loss of jobs if we do not fix this shortfall. I wanted to make sure my friend in the chair understands that if

we do not fix this, the State of Arkansas will lose almost 5,000 jobs.

I say to my friend, Senator MURRAY, I looked at Washington and if we do not fix this problem, 7,211 jobs—in the State of California, given our size, 32,315 jobs—will be lost if we do not fix this problem.

Now, as I calculated, that is six times more people than who live in Wasilla, AK, who would lose their jobs in California alone. So we are talking families, families who need good-paying jobs. I wanted to ask my friend a question, because I see that she has her chart that says, “Democrats sounded alarm, Republicans pressed snooze.”

This was true in the early days. But I would urge her to change what they have done. Now they have turned the alarm into a siren in our State. I mean, my friend knows the calls that are coming into our committee, to her committee. People are concerned that these jobs will be stopped midway through or slowed down. And when you slow down the work, it is terrible for everybody. It is inconvenient, it is money lost to corporations, it is jobs lost. There is no excuse.

I say to my friend, does she agree now that, yes, in the beginning they snoozed, they also, according to my records, launched five filibusters against fixing this problem? So even then it was a little more aggressive than snoozing. And if we put that into the context of five filibusters, that is 5 of 92 filibusters the Republicans have launched this Congress.

So when we come back and we debate change versus the status quo, I say to the American people and ask my friend if she agrees: Are not we facing more of the same on obstruction, more of the same filibusters, more of the same: I do not really care about middle-class workers, you lose your job, too bad, as we spend our money abroad?

I ask my friend if she has this deep sense of where we are?

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I share with my colleague from California a real sense of frustration. The people across the country know we are in political season. They understand politics. They understand all of that. But this is beyond politics. This is about severe consequences. I do not understand putting partisan politics, more filibusters, an effort to not let anything happen, on the backs of every single community across this country.

These are specific dollars that go to keeping our construction projects moving along. Now, I get frustrated like everyone in the summer when you come across a project in progress and you have to wait. But I want that construction process done because I know that highway needs to be repaired.

We saw a bridge collapse not that long ago. Not that long ago deaths occurred. A huge community in Minnesota was impacted. That can happen across the country. We are attempting to fix those construction projects and they are going to be halted if we do not fix this trust fund problem.

This has dire consequences.

This is not about politics. It is not about a Presidential election. It is not about who is going to stop what. This is about real consequences in our community, jobs lost in the construction sector to families who will not have a paycheck next month in the middle of an economy that is already struggling.

In some of our States, as we know well, the construction season is short; it ends in a few short months. And those projects, if they are halted now, will not begin again until next March or April. The long-term consequences are real.

Our Governors had better wake up and start calling all of our Republican colleagues. Our community leaders

who want these projects completed had better start calling our Republican colleagues. We have a solution in hand. It is easy to do. We can do it today. The President now has turned around, finally, and asked for this solution.

I do not understand why it is being blocked. It makes no sense to me. I can tell you, to those families who wake up 2 weeks from now without a job, and to those families who are trying to drive to get to work and all of a sudden they see a critical construction project stopped in their State, they are going to be asking all of us: What are you doing back there?

I heard Senator MCCAIN say recently: Watch what happens in Congress over the next several weeks. Well, I hope the American people are watching. What we see is obstruction and filibusters with dire consequences. It is going to be felt in every one of our communities if we do not put this aside for once and at least get this highway trust fund fixed.

Mrs. BOXER. In the remaining time we have, I want to thank my friend. We work very closely, because I am the Chair of the committee that authorizes these programs and she is the one who funds them. We work very closely with our ranking members. Those are bipartisan measures.

I want to be clear one more time, because pretty soon we are going to come back here and we are going to ask unanimous consent to fix this problem. We are going to be back here pretty soon.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a document called “State Federal Highway Funds in Jeopardy.”

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

STATE FEDERAL HIGHWAY FUNDS IN JEOPARDY—SUPPORT BAUCUS-GRASSLEY TRUST FUND FIX TO PREVENT 34 PERCENT CUT

State	Actual FY 2008	Projected FY 2009 without fix	FY09 funding cut	Projected job loss
Alabama	\$703,608,862	\$490,508,434	-213,100,427	-7,416
Alaska	392,336,871	290,793,680	-101,543,191	-3,534
Arizona	667,147,856	438,664,311	-228,483,545	-7,951
Arkansas	456,190,231	320,021,084	-136,169,147	-4,739
California	3,241,415,426	2,312,797,348	-928,618,078	-32,315
Colorado	483,871,715	336,831,459	-147,040,256	-5,117
Connecticut	482,654,710	322,178,744	-160,475,967	-5,584
Delaware	151,330,042	105,505,130	-45,824,912	-1,595
Dist. of Col.	144,672,395	98,449,152	-46,223,243	-1,609
Florida	1,743,482,571	1,170,330,313	-573,152,259	-19,945
Georgia	1,254,148,068	854,334,154	-399,813,914	-13,913
Hawaii	161,397,489	108,732,842	-52,664,647	-1,833
Idaho	265,659,540	186,583,127	-79,076,413	-2,752
Illinois	1,226,941,903	860,514,023	-366,427,880	-12,751
Indiana	883,116,254	613,381,711	-269,734,544	-9,386
Iowa	422,814,986	275,671,959	-147,143,027	-5,120
Kansas	364,702,387	246,228,246	-118,474,141	-4,123
Kentucky	614,997,743	424,872,735	-190,125,008	-6,616
Louisiana	577,720,798	388,222,990	-189,497,808	-6,594
Maine	178,953,421	124,718,277	-54,235,144	-1,887
Maryland	578,678,880	388,200,419	-190,478,461	-6,628
Massachusetts	609,422,307	398,142,135	-211,280,172	-7,352
Michigan	1,007,665,781	762,900,607	-244,765,175	-8,518
Minnesota	575,827,393	433,242,592	-142,584,801	-4,962
Mississippi	433,794,557	300,588,496	-133,206,061	-4,635
Missouri	829,306,795	577,297,558	-252,009,237	-8,770
Montana	338,011,659	239,506,863	-98,504,796	-3,428
Nebraska	271,341,203	184,454,956	-86,886,247	-3,024
Nevada	274,821,219	173,608,407	-101,212,812	-3,522
New Hampshire	160,957,601	108,790,657	-52,166,944	-1,815
New Jersey	933,422,014	627,578,740	-305,843,274	-10,643
New Mexico	331,049,059	237,065,570	-93,983,489	-3,271
New York	1,652,187,126	1,082,942,105	-569,245,020	-19,809
North Carolina	982,279,233	690,898,439	-291,380,795	-10,140
North Dakota	226,404,974	155,931,552	-70,473,422	-2,452
Ohio	1,251,880,095	900,869,616	-351,010,479	-12,215
Oklahoma	542,557,073	369,868,439	-172,688,634	-6,009

STATE FEDERAL HIGHWAY FUNDS IN JEOPARDY—SUPPORT BAUCUS-GRASSLEY TRUST FUND FIX TO PREVENT 34 PERCENT CUT—Continued

State	Actual FY 2008	Projected FY 2009 without fix	FY09 funding cut	Projected job loss
Oregon	434,153,577	294,969,678	-139,183,898	-4,843
Pennsylvania	1,607,827,381	1,064,325,708	-543,501,672	-18,913
Rhode Island	200,252,272	131,121,237	-69,131,035	-2,406
South Carolina	572,462,981	390,280,157	-182,182,824	-6,340
South Dakota	245,963,474	174,549,231	-71,414,243	-2,485
Tennessee	768,763,258	533,198,427	-235,564,831	-8,197
Texas	2,802,411,108	1,942,990,215	-859,420,893	-29,907
Utah	273,508,721	188,070,215	-85,438,506	-2,973
Vermont	161,725,931	114,413,876	-47,312,055	-1,646
Virginia	907,625,718	636,053,577	-271,572,141	-9,450
Washington	623,821,456	416,592,681	-207,228,775	-7,211
West Virginia	391,319,504	271,937,690	-119,381,814	-4,154
Wisconsin	676,542,465	480,036,649	-196,505,816	-6,838
Wyoming	229,637,435	166,470,893	-63,166,542	-2,198
Subtotal	\$35,312,785,520	\$24,406,237,107	-10,906,548,414	-379,537
Allocated Programs	4,127,089,170	1,909,255,590	(2,217,833,580)	
Un designated High Priority Projects	1,513,574	1,061,467	(452,108)	
Projects of National & Regional Sig.	410,949,000	230,558,400	(180,390,600)	
National Corridor Infrastructure Program	449,988,000	252,460,800	(197,527,200)	
Transportation Projects	590,259,516	331,158,586	(259,100,930)	
Bridge (Sec. 144(g))	92,400,000	64,800,000	(27,600,000)	
Transfer to Sections 154 & 164	231,066,579	4,468,050	(226,598,529)	
Total	41,216,051,359	27,200,000,000	(14,016,051,359)	

Source: Federal Highway Administration. Data include apportioned programs plus High Priority Projects. Transportation Construction Coalition analysis of job impact.

Mrs. BOXER. This shows in the State of New Hampshire, of Senator GREGG, who was the one who objected yesterday, a loss of 1,800 jobs. It shows in the State of South Carolina, the State of Senator DEMINT, a loss of 6,300 jobs.

I say to my friend from Montana, who I know supports repaying the highway trust fund that he is working to support, 3,428 jobs in the State of Montana would be lost. That is big. That is larger than some towns.

Think about more than 30,000 families in my case, 32,000 families being hit by layoffs in the middle of a recession because Republicans continue to filibuster and to filibuster and to do nothing. It is not going to go down well.

I am glad you mentioned that Senator McCain says for the people to watch the Senate. I urge the people to watch the Senate this week where we are going to try to fix this highway trust fund, and we are going to get this done if we can. If we cannot, we know who is stopping us.

We are also going to work on a Defense authorization bill that is so important while there are two wars going on. I hope Senator McCain will keep saying that on the stump: Watch the Senate. And this issue is going to be as clear as a bell. I urge you to go change that sign now, because, yes, the Republicans snoozed earlier, but now they are in fighting mode and they have raised the alarm to a siren.

And all of our Governors, you are right, ought to be calling, and our State legislators as well.

I want to thank you very much for your patience.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 3 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senator from California and I have been on the Senate floor this morning talking about the dire straits we are in in terms of the construction trust fund, the highway trust fund, that provides the money across the country for construction projects and the fact that within a few short days our States are not going to be getting the checks they need to pay for those construction projects, resulting in layoffs across this country and construction projects literally coming to a halt very quickly.

We are going to offer a unanimous consent request to bring up that bill again and pass it and get it to the President, as he requested. We understand, unfortunately, now there is an objection on the Republican side, and we will not be able to do this request at this time. I respect our Republicans' request to be able to discuss this issue at their weekly meeting they are going to be having shortly to determine how to move forward. But I want everyone on notice this is a critical issue, it is not going to go away, and we are going to be asking again this afternoon to move this legislation forward because we believe we have a responsibility as leaders in this country to get this trust fund emergency problem fixed and moving. We hope our Republican colleagues, upon reflection, will join us and we can quietly pass this legislation this afternoon and move on to other major issues of the day.

But to me this is the most important critical issue facing us right now in the Senate, and I hope we can move it this afternoon.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, let me say, I agree with everything my friend said. We are talking about highway construction. We are talking about fixing dangerous bridges. We have all seen

what happens when there is neglect there. We are seeing all of this happen in the middle of a recession, where last month alone 84,000 jobs were lost. As we look at the list, we see if our Republican colleagues and friends do not join us in this effort, and they do not fix this shortfall problem, which, by the way, is a reimbursement to the highway trust fund of moneys that were borrowed from it—it is a reimbursement—we are looking at a loss of 379,537 jobs.

Mr. President, I ask you in rhetorical fashion, is this the time where this country can afford to see 379,537 jobs disappear when we are already at the worst unemployment rate we have seen in 5 years? We have to stop business as usual around here. We need to start the change now—the change away from confrontation, everything is political, filibuster after filibuster. The time is now.

So we will be back after the caucuses have their meetings this afternoon in the hopes that they have resolved this issue, that they step out of the way and let us get this work done so our families—our families all across this country who work in the construction trades—can breathe a sigh of relief. They have enough on their plate. They cannot get good health care; they have problems sending their kids to school; the price of gas. We all know what has happened to our families. This would be one additional slap they simply do not deserve. They do not deserve any of this.

We say to our Republican friends, leave your politics outside the Chamber for this one.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WEBB. 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.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, today I am going to offer an amendment to the Defense authorization bill that will do two things. The first is it will extend the mandate or, shall I say, direct the President to negotiate the extension of the mandate we now operate under inside Iraq under the rubric of the United Nations. The second would be to place a restriction on the implementation of the strategic framework agreement that is now being negotiated inside Iraq to bring it inside the Constitution of the United States and require that the Congress of the United States approve this strategic framework agreement before it is actually put into motion.

The reality right now is, our justification for operating inside Iraq under international law will expire at the end of this year. For almost a year, this administration has been negotiating two separate agreements with the Government of Iraq. One is a strategic framework agreement; the other is a status of forces agreement that would take place under the umbrella of the strategic framework agreement.

This period of negotiation has been done largely without the involvement of the Congress. It will, if implemented, shape and direct the policy of the United States in Iraq for a good period of time—our security framework, all these sorts of things that traditionally have taken place only inside a treaty. Under the Constitution, a treaty is required to be approved by a two-thirds vote in the Senate.

So we have two realities that have come together, that by the end of this year we need to address in some form or another. The first is we have to be operating under some proper international legal structure in order to maintain our forces in Iraq after December 31. The other is we need to be negotiating the right kind of bilateral future relationship between our country and the country of Iraq.

This amendment intends to resolve both of these situations in a way that is not disruptive, that is within the constraints of the Constitution, and it will allow us some time to get the right kind of strategic framework in place rather than our having to rush it, as we are seeing right now, to get something in place by the end of the year that is arguably not within the Constitution.

The first portion of this amendment basically says the President will direct the U.S. Special Representative to the United Nations to seek an extension of the multinational agreement that already is in place under the rubric of the Security Council of the United Na-

tions. It also states it is the sense of Congress that this extension should expire within a year or earlier. It should expire at the end of next year, unless we have a strategic framework agreement in place, at which time it will expire earlier.

The second goes to the notion that this agreement must be approved with the consent of the Congress. I have not gone so far in this amendment as to say we should treat this agreement as we would treat a longer, more formal treaty, with the recognition that treaties sometimes get tied up for years, but that we should have a law by the Congress, a vote by a majority of the Congress, approving this major step forward in our relationship with the country of Iraq.

As it stands right now, I am a member of the Armed Services Committee. I am also a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations. We have not been shown one word of the actual document that is being negotiated. There are members of the Iraqi Parliament that have been shown portions of this document, if not all of it.

I think it is very important for us to give this agreement the time we can give it if we extend the mandate of the United Nations for a year but also to get the proper involvement of the Congress in this most important step into the future of our relationship with Iraq.

I hope my colleagues will support this amendment. I hope we can have bipartisan support on it. This is an amendment that goes to the propriety of the constitutional process and also is intended to take the time constraints out of the negotiation of this agreement with Iraq.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:28 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

COLOMBIA

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the remarkable success story in the fight against terrorism and narcotrafficking that I believe very strongly needs to be told. It is a story that has largely gone unnoticed because it has not taken place in the Eastern Hemisphere or east of here, where most of the world's attention is focused today. It comes, rather, from the Southern Hemisphere in a country where protagonists have surged ahead of narcoterrorists militarily, while simultaneously improving the overall security and safety of the civilian population. What is most important is they

have done so while ensuring that protection of human rights and adherence to international humanitarian law are fully integrated into the daily life of every member of the security forces.

I am speaking about Colombia, of course. I visited there just a couple of weeks ago. I visited Bogota. I also visited Ecuador to find out what was going on in Latin America. I was greatly encouraged by the tangible evidence I saw in Colombia of a country in complete transformation. Most of us probably realize that just about 6 years ago, in 2002, as much as 40 percent of the area of Colombia was controlled by terrorist groups and ruthless narcotics trafficking. Many of my colleagues visited Colombia at the time and brought back grim reports, as they should have, of a country apparently descending into chaos, with a dim future, as Colombia was on the verge of becoming a failed state. The security situation was bleak, the economic outlook was decidedly negative, and drug trafficking threatened the very culture of Colombia and its people.

The situation had been slowly deteriorating in Colombia for decades. Even before the United States experienced the dramatic acts of terrorism of 2001 that would change our national perceptions forever, Colombians were dealing with an increasingly dangerous, deadly, and brutal form of terrorism that threatened to tear the country apart. Drug cartels were controlling larger and larger swaths of territory and had turned Colombia into the world's leading exporter of cocaine. Much of the cocaine was finding its way into the United States. Insurgent groups we have come to know as the FARC or the ELN were turning Colombia into a war zone, negatively affecting the economy and threatening the very stability of the nation.

That was the situation in 1998 when former Colombian President Pastrana conceived Plan Colombia, a 6-year plan to end long-armed conflict, to eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development. As you may recall, the United States agreed to take a gamble and invest in Colombia. President Clinton, a Democrat, led the way, and he was followed by President Bush. Both were strong supporters. The good news is that since 1998, the United States has continued to be the principal contributor to the plan, mostly through the Andean Counterdrug Initiative but also through foreign military financing and the central counter-narcotics account of the Department of Defense.

Today, our mutual objectives in support of Plan Colombia have evolved from a strict counternarcotics focus to encompass counterterrorism activities as well. Our investment appears to have paid off with dividends. I am happy to report that with U.S. aid to Colombian security forces and assistance in trade preferences under the Andean Trade Preferences Agreement, or the ATPA, the Colombian people have