

Instead of making reforms that empower States instead of bureaucrats in Washington, the bill relies on Washington-style accounting gimmicks and proliferates costly mandates that sharply raise the cost of highway spending to the American taxpayer. I agree with my colleagues that we need to pass a transportation bill, but not when we cannot meet the financial obligations that the bill requires. Therefore, I did not support it.

EXTENSION OF TAX EXTENDERS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would like to engage in a colloquy with my good friends the Senator from Kentucky, the Republican leader, and the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS.

Earlier today the Senate completed action on a transportation measure that provides for investment in our Nation's infrastructure. The Senate works best when we work together, as evidenced by the broad bipartisan support for this bill.

I would like to take a moment to raise another issue of mutual interest—the extension of tax provisions that have expired or are expiring this year. These provisions, although temporary, are long-standing features of our tax system, including the research credit, renewable energy production and efficiency incentives, and the State sales tax deduction. They provide important benefits, not just for American families and businesses, but to our economy as a whole.

Although we were unable to address the package of tax extenders as part of the transportation bill, I was encouraged by the level of Senators' interest in extending these provisions in a timely fashion.

I would welcome the opportunity to work with my friend from Kentucky in finding a path forward soon on tax extenders. It is important that we take care of this early in the year so that taxpayers can plan and make investment decisions.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I am happy to respond to my friend, Majority Leader REID.

These tax provisions certainly are important to millions of American families and businesses, and I would expect that Congress would act on these sooner rather than later. The uncertainty that follows when we allow these to expire and don't allow families, small businesses, and job creators generally to properly plan is unacceptable and damaging to our economy.

That said, there are a number of members of my conference who have serious questions about some of the provisions that were voted on today. For a number of years Congress has reflexively extended all of these measures without any meaningful review or oversight. I know that the Republican members of the Finance Committee would gladly join in a bipartisan effort to conduct a much needed critical re-

view of these measures and recommend to the Senate which should be dropped, which need modification and which are worthy of support as currently constructed. The repeated expiration and renewal of these various targeted tax credits and the fact our corporate tax rate will soon be the highest among our major trading partners underscores the need for Congress to take on corporate tax reform at the earliest possible date.

So while I join the majority leader in welcoming the opportunity to work together to find a path forward, I would hope that both bodies of Congress would have the opportunity to look carefully at what is in this package and see if we can't come to an agreement on what is best for the country.

Mr. REID. I thank the Republican leader. I look forward to working with him and our Senate colleagues to pass tax extenders on a seamless and timely basis. It is important that we provide taxpayers with much-needed certainty.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I would like to thank leaders REID and MCCONNELL for emphasizing the importance of getting extenders done. As we prepare for tax reform, it will be important for us to examine these provisions to determine whether we are getting the most bang for our buck. Tax reform, however, will take some time and these provisions have already expired. We should provide certainty to taxpayers by extending them through this year as soon as possible.

These provisions are important to American families and businesses. These provisions include college tuition relief for working families. These are tax provisions that help create jobs, support research and development, and bolster growth of American businesses across the globe. It is also critical for our energy sector. A dozen energy tax incentives expired at the end of last year and several more expire this year. Each day we fail to extend these incentives means jobs for our economy. I am glad we are working on a bipartisan basis to extend these provisions and I hope we can do so as soon as possible. We need to make sure that taxpayers don't see tax increases because Congress failed to do its duty.

Mr. HATCH. I thank leaders REID, MCCONNELL, and Chairman BAUCUS for discussing tax extender provisions this afternoon.

I want to reinforce a couple of points I raised earlier this year when the Finance Committee held a hearing on tax extenders.

My first point is that the explosion of temporary tax provisions in recent years has been a very notable and problematic trend. The number of temporary tax provisions has grown from 42 in 1998 to 154 in 2011. Not many people can be found that will say that Congress should continue dealing with tax extenders in a business-as-usual manner. And we should not continue doing business as usual when it comes to extenders. Recently, Congress has al-

lowed important temporary tax incentives such as the research and development credit to expire. Then, after the business decisions have already been made, Congress has retroactively extended the tax provisions. If a provision is worthy of being in the tax code, then optimally it should be permanent. For instance, the R and D credit is an extremely worthy provision, and it should be an enhanced and permanent tax incentive. That is what Chairman BAUCUS and I have proposed in a bill we introduced in September 2011.

My second point is that tax incentives play a very important role in businesses' planning of their affairs, making investments, and creating jobs. And these job creators don't want bad certainty they don't want to hear that their taxes are going up. Congress should provide this certainty by making permanent the provisions that are worthy of remaining in the law, and eliminating those that are not. Chairman BAUCUS and I agree, along with many of our colleagues, that the current tax code needs to be reformed. In the meantime, before tax reform is accomplished, Congress needs to decide what to do about the tax extender provisions that have expired. The Finance Committee should play its role in considering these time-sensitive issues. The members should debate the merits of each of these provisions and vote accordingly. After that exercise, then the full Senate should consider the Finance Committee's recommendations and move that product through the legislative process.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

FINAL PASSAGE OF S. 1813

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I didn't want to take a lot of time before the vote because I knew we were anxious to get it done, and certainly we have been through this so many times—passing a transportation bill and a reauthorization bill. I was asked by one of my Republican Members: We have done so many of these extensions, what would be the difference between an extension and a short 2-year bill? I commented: You can't get any of the improvements. You can't do any of the planning.

I would also like to say this to my Republican friends: I regret some of them voted against it, not being fully aware of some of the great reforms we have in the bill. I appreciate the fact that Senator BOXER was agreeing to some aspects that she didn't agree with

philosophically, such as some of the streamlining and enhancements. We have now resolved the enhancement problem so decisions can be made by the States. So I think that was good.

I wanted to at this point mention our staff, even though I already mentioned Ruth VanMark earlier. I was kidding when I said she is off of probation. She has been loyal to me for 22 years and been through several of these bills with me. Let me also mention James O'Keeffe, Murphie Barrett, Kyle Miller, Dimitri Karakitsos, and Alex Renjel. So we have a great team over here, and, of course, they have a great team also on the Democratic side, with Bettina Poirier, David Napoliello, Andrew Dohrmann, Grant Cope, and Tyler Rushforth from Senator BOXER's office.

So, Mr. President, some good reforms have taken place, and we need now to get serious about what we are going to do in the next short while in preparation of a much longer and better and more robust highway reauthorization bill. Of course, first is to get with the House Members, get into conference and see what we can accomplish.

Again, I thank all the staff, all the people working on this bill, Senator BOXER, and, of course, the majority leader, HARRY REID, as well as MITCH MCCONNELL.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks Senator LANDRIEU be recognized.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I again thank everybody. During our earlier morning business period I praised all of the staffs from both sides of the aisle, all of the chairmen, and all of the ranking members. So thank you so much. It was a great vote, 74 to 22. If Senator LAUTENBERG had been here, it would have been 75. So what more can a chairman ask.

Thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I want to take a minute to thank Senator BOXER and Senator INHOFE and the staffs of both of those excellent Senators who have worked so hard on this bill that is so important to our country. From New York to California, from Alaska to Florida, this bill represents over \$110 billion of investments in America. Whether we are talking about two-lane roads, farm-to-market roads, one-lane or two-lane roads, interstate, or rail that is running in our urban areas that are congested, time consuming, and frustrating for our drivers; whether it is for the trucking industry that depends on good, solid, strong highways; the petrochemical industry, the oil and gas industry, or our small businesses, it is important for America's infrastructure to be strengthened, and that is what we did today.

I know the Senate has been criticized over and over again about not being able to function. But today we saw, as our leader said, one of our most conservative Members and one of our most progressive Members bring a bill to this floor and get 74 votes. That is hard work, and that is the way the Senate should work.

I am so proud to have been a small part of this overall bill with Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator SHELBY from Alabama, and many other Senators who joined us in an effort to put on a very important amendment to the gulf coast and to the country in this Transportation bill. That bill, which was adopted as an amendment to the Transportation bill, as you know, Mr. President, is known as the RESTORE Act.

The reason we call it the RESTORE Act is because that is exactly what it will do. It will restore America's energy coast—the gulf coast. We are proud of our energy infrastructure. We are also proud of our fishing industry and our ecotourism industry. We are also proud of our commercial fishing and recreational charter captains who take people from all over the world off the beautiful coast of Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas with some of the best fishing in the world.

We have fisheries that are alive and vibrant, not overfished, with people in business and restaurants serving this food all over the country. We are so proud to have passed the RESTORE Act, which is going to take not taxpayer money, not money adding to the deficit, but monies from a fine that is going to be levied by the courts very soon—very soon. This fine will be levied against BP because of the single largest environmental disaster in the Nation's history.

BP, an operator of oil and gas wells not just in the gulf but all around the world, drills safely in many places. But, boy, they sure messed up this one. There were 11 men killed, others were injured, and hundreds of millions of gallons of oil were spilled into the Gulf of Mexico. It was a horrible accident. It should not have happened.

No industry is perfect. No operation like this, whether it is going to space or going below sea, whether it is producing sophisticated equipment or is involved in the mining or extraction business has a complete guarantee of safety and perfection. But this was a terrible accident. We wish it never would have happened.

The courts are sorting out whether this company was simply negligent or grossly negligent. We can have our opinions, but it is not something we need to decide. What we did decide, though, is when the court set that penalty, that what is right for the States that were so injured—with marshes inundated with oil, and pelicans, dolphins, and other wildlife and birds that live and breed and count on this environment to be there—is for that money to be redirected back to the gulf coast.

Because of the good work of our Presiding Officer and Senator BAUCUS—and I want to thank, particularly, Senator BINGAMAN—we were also able to add—not in the RESTORE Act, not taking money away from the gulf but in a side-by-side—some money to fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Now, it is only for 2 years, but there is going to be more money in that fund than has been there for a while, which will also accommodate the environment nationally, and that provides a balance and a synergy.

The gulf coast wants to be fair. Our people have suffered. But we also know the country has been very generous to us through a series of very unfortunate events in the last 6 years: Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike, horrible hurricanes. But every part of the Nation has experienced disaster, whether it was the fires in California or the flooding in the Northeast or the hurricane last season that raked the Northeast. Last season, in fact, we will remember, was the season that had the largest number of disasters. There were 12 that cost over \$1 billion. That has not happened before.

So lots of parts of the country have suffered. But the gulf coast has suffered in a special way, unfortunately, with a series of events, hurricanes, and oil spills. So we are grateful.

We tried to make this bill appropriate, leaving 20 percent of the general fund, which will secure doubling the amount of money in that liability trust fund. That is a benefit to the Nation. We put in some money for land and water. That will benefit the Nation, and there is some money to establish an oceans trust.

I ask for another 1 minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. LANDRIEU. That will benefit the Nation. But the bulk of that penalty money will go to the gulf coast, and it will not be wasted, I promise. The bill has tight safeguards and guidelines about the way that money will be spent restoring our marshes, rebuilding our coastline; we have lost the size of the State of Rhode Island.

I wish to thank so much the groups. There were over 200 organizations, from Ducks Unlimited to the National Environmental Defense Fund, to Nature Conservancy, to many of the Chambers of Commerce, locally and nationally, that supported the RESTORE Act. Without their help, this never would have happened because we don't get a vote as we did on the Senate floor without a lot of help. We got I believe it was maybe 76 votes on the floor of the Senate. It is hard to get a resolution on mom and apple pie to get 76 votes today. So I am very humbled to say it was the work of many people. I was proud to lead this effort with Senator SHELBY, my partner from Alabama.

But my final comment is, work needs to be done. That is my final point. The

amendment is in the Transportation bill. The Transportation bill has now left the building, left the Senate. It is now on its way over to the House. I hope the House will take this bill—and I know they have their own opinions about how things should be. But it is important to get this \$110 billion of investments out for America. We need to keep this recovery going. People are looking for jobs, well-paying jobs. Small businesses get these contracts as well as large businesses for our rail, our water, our transportation.

I hope the RESTORE Act, because it is safely tucked in this bill, will generate some additional votes on the House side. I hope my colleagues from the gulf coast in the House, Republicans and Democrats, will say: Overall, it may not be the House's Transportation bill, but you know what. It is a good bill.

Twenty-two Republicans over here voted for this bill. As Senator INHOFE said, there is streamlining, there are new approaches, there are better approaches, less waste, less fraud, less abuse in this bill. So there are some good things they can vote on.

I thank, again, in conclusion, Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER and particularly Senator BAUCUS for his help in helping us, at the very end, to put what we needed to get together to pass this RESTORE Act. I will continue to report to all how the courts are going to rule, how much this fine is going to be, and how that money is spent in the next couple years to help save a very important part of our Nation and a part of the Nation that contributes substantially to the GDP of our Nation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ORDER VITIATED

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order to proceed to executive session at 2 p.m. be vitiated.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each and that the time be equally divided.

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

The Senator from New York is recognized.

COMPLIMENTING SENATOR LANDRIEU

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me compliment my colleague from Louisiana for her diligence, her hard work. I don't think anybody effectively delivers more for her State in this

Chamber than the Senator from Louisiana. I can assure you, knowing her, now that she has done this, she will have another proposal and she will be talking to us about it probably within a few hours. Because of her hard work and charm and many other good qualities, she never wears out her welcome, at least with the Senator from New York.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the big issue everyone is talking about is gasoline prices. Obviously, they are a scourge on average families and on our national economy. There are many long-term solutions we debate: the pipeline, incentives for green energy, more exploration, nuclear energy, and of course conservation—probably the No. 1 way to, in the long term, reduce imports of foreign oil into the country and reduce the price.

But everyone is asking, what are short-term solutions?

To me, there is obviously one that would matter more than all the others and that has the best hope of getting something done. So 2 weeks ago, in a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, I asked the State Department to pressure the Government of Saudi Arabia to use its excess oil capacities as a means to calm oil markets. It has been my position that this is the quickest way to bring down gas prices, and the reason is very simple. The No. 1 thing jacking up prices right now is the fear in the markets that Iran will shut off its production.

We have an economic boycott, a majority of nations of the world, of Iran to prevent them from going nuclear. What are they trying to do? They are saber rattling: Squeeze us too hard, we are going to cut off oil. In fact, they cut off oil sales to Britain and France, although those are symbolic because Britain and France do not buy much Iranian oil. But with Iran's saber rattling that they might well cut off oil exports, the price has gone up and up and up. Those who speculate in oil use that and probably have it go up even further.

So that is why I have been, for the last 2 weeks, suggesting the Saudis say they will produce more oil and that they will replace every barrel of production Iran takes off the market for the foreseeable future with a new barrel. The Saudis of course can do that. The Saudis have 2.8 million barrels of extra production, they and the Gulf States. Iran's total sales to the rest of the world are 2.2 million barrels a day. Therefore, they have the ability to do it.

Today I was pleased Saudi Arabia declared it will fill any oil gap as a result of the Iran oil embargo. At the 13th International Energy Forum in Kuwait, the largest gathering of oil-producing and consuming countries, the Saudi oil minister, Ali al-Naimi, said the following: "Saudi Arabia and oth-

ers remain poised to make good any shortfalls—perceived or real—in crude oil supply."

Right after the Saudi oil minister made this announcement, prices dropped 0.6 percent. My belief is that if the markets believe this is real, the price will come down significantly further. So we are asking the Saudis to repeat this promise because, make no mistake, the more the Saudis repeat the promise to offset Iran's output, the more explicit they are, the more emphatic they are, the more they assure the markets they are for real and that this is not just a psychological device to calm the markets for the moment, the more markets will calm down more permanently and the more the price will come down.

I wish to compliment the Obama administration for doing tremendous work behind the scenes. I have talked to many people in the administration over the last few weeks and they assured me and told me some details of what they were doing and their pressure has finally gotten the Saudis to make this statement. This statement is a great start, but as I said, it should be repeated, reemphasized, and elaborated upon by the Saudis so the markets will be assured.

The President was right on money when he said we also need long-term to our dependence on foreign oil. He is right that drilling alone will not solve our problems. We are producing more domestic oil in the United States than we have in 8 years, and we have discovered a huge supply of natural gas. But we have to look at all fronts. We have to look at green energy, wind, solar. There are tax breaks that encourage these new industries that will employ thousands. We ought to pass them. Our colleagues voted against them on this highway bill. That doesn't make much sense. I, for one, would look at nuclear as something that produces clean energy, that doesn't produce global warming. It has to be safe. Of course, we have to continue to look to produce more oil.

I was one of six or seven on this side, actually—as the Senator from Louisiana is importuning—who voted to open parts of the east gulf to produce more oil and it has begun to do that and that will help.

The No. 1 one thing we have to do in the long run is conservation. The fact that we are getting more miles per gallon by 2020 will reduce our importation of foreign oil—which raises the price—by more than 1.1 million barrels a day. In fact, since we gave the President the ability to increase those CAFE standards further, and he did it, the prediction is, by 2030, we will not need to import any oil as our cars get 45 and 50 miles a gallon and the demand for gasoline goes down. The No. 1 reason we have to import oil is because of gasoline and diesel fuel and airplane fuel. Most of our energy can come from natural gas and can come from water power, wind power, and solar power.