

We should extend this program. We should address the Export-Import Bank's reauthorization. That is why, as we look at the Landrieu-Reed-Levin substitute amendment, it includes these provisions. It includes reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, and it includes the extension of the SBA 504 program. It also includes a number of other provisions that address some of the concerns that have been expressed by the House-passed capital formation bill.

Senators LANDRIEU, REED, and LEVIN were on the floor earlier and very eloquently elaborated on those changes. I urge my colleagues to support that substitute amendment to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank and to extend SBA's 504 Loan Program.

I ask unanimous consent that I be added as a cosponsor to that Landrieu-Reed-Levin amendment.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PROTECTION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as news reports focus on yet another horrific shooting in an American school, we must again confront the simple and sad truth: tragedies like this are often preventable. On February 27, 17-year-old T.J. Lane opened fire in his high school cafeteria in Chardon, OH, killing three of his classmates and wounding two other students.

This is a narrative we have heard over and over again. Lane is believed to have taken the gun from his grandfather's barn. Similar to what happened 5 days earlier in Port Orchard, WA, when a 9-year-old boy accidentally shot his classmate with a .45-caliber handgun he took from his mother's house. Or in 2009, when a 15-year-old boy was institutionalized after stealing three guns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition from his father as part of a plan to shoot other students at Pottstown High School in Philadelphia. Sadly, these are not rare circumstances. A 2000 study by the U.S. Secret Service found that in more than

65 percent of school shootings, the attacker got the gun from his or her own home or from a relative.

The guardians of these children never intended for their firearms to be used for harm. But they left their loaded guns without any measures to prevent their children—or anyone else—from using them irresponsibly. According to reports by the Legal Community Against Violence, in a nation where approximately one-third of households with minors have a firearm, studies have shown that 55 percent of these households store one or more of their guns unlocked. Another study showed that 22 percent of the parents who claimed their children had never handled their firearms were contradicted by their children. When it comes to gun safety, a young person's curiosity and recklessness can be a dangerous thing.

It is imperative that gun owners across the country safely store their weapons out of the reach of young people. But despite these troubling statistics, there are no Federal laws that prevent adults from leaving firearms easily accessible to children and minors. Some State and local governments around the Nation have adopted child firearm access prevention measures, and these laws work. From 1990 to 1994, in the 12 States where child access prevention laws had been in effect for at least 1 year, unintentional firearm deaths fell by 23 percent among children under the age of 15. Laws that encourage parents to keep their firearms locked and unloaded, to store their ammunition in a locked location separate from their firearms, and to educate their children on proper gun use and safety, would help prevent shootings involving children and teenagers.

We must not wait for the next Chardon High School or the next Virginia Tech or the next Columbine. Commonsense gun safety legislation protects our schools, our universities, our religious institutions, and our homes from gun violence. But despite this evidence, legislation has been introduced in this Congress to dismantle the few Federal gun safety provisions that protect the American people. I urge our colleagues to support sensible gun safety measures that could prevent tragedies like the one unfolding in Ohio.

MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today I come to floor to express concerns about the transportation bill recently voted on by the Senate.

My State of Texas is the fastest-growing State in America, and our economic success has made us a national model and a magnet for talent. But rapid population and economic growth means an ever-increasing strain on our infrastructure.

This legislation takes several positive steps such as consolidating pro-

grams, improving project delivery, and expanding the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, also known as TIFIA, which has been successful in addressing various infrastructure needs in Texas and across our Nation.

Unfortunately, the bill is also deeply flawed. First, it is a 2-year proposal. Changing policy for such a short period of time does not give States like Texas the certainty they need to undertake meaningful long-term transportation projects.

In addition, the Senate bill uses 10 years' worth of revenue to pay for 2 years of spending. This is the type of budget gimmickry that makes Americans suspicious of Washington.

So we have legislation that is short-sighted and relies on accounting tricks. But the problems don't end there. The bill also moves us away from the user-pay principle. While this might work in the short term, closing a large funding gap with non-user tax revenues would ultimately destroy the Highway Trust Fund's protected budget status.

The legislation also does not address the Trust Fund's long-term insolvency problem. Instead, it spends down the balance in the Trust Fund leaving a substantial deficit starting in fiscal year 2014.

Finally, Texas receives significantly less from the Highway Trust Fund than it pays in. In 2009, Texas had the lowest Trust Fund return ratio in the country, according to a Heritage Foundation study. Congress simply must address the equity issue rather than rewarding a few States based on their previous share of highway funding.

I know there are those in my State who favor this legislation, and I share their commitment to finding solutions to our transportation challenges. But I believe the people of Texas and the people of America deserve a better approach. I hope that we can improve the bill during the conference process. Our challenges are difficult, but they are not insurmountable, and there is no reason we can't make 21st-century American infrastructure the very best in the world.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I would like to commend my colleagues for passing the highway bill yesterday, which included language from Mariah's Act, a bill I introduced last year. This bill reauthorizes the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NHTSA, and will improve safety programs on our roadways and safety standards in our vehicles.

Mariah's Act was named after Mariah West, a teen from Rogers, AR. A day before her high school graduation in 2010, Mariah was killed as a result of texting while driving. Mariah's mother, Merry, has since become an advocate against texting and driving and continues to promote safe driving habits across the country.

In part, Mariah's Act will prevent others from a similar tragedy by concentrating resources to prevent distracted driving. In 2010, more than 3,000

people died and thousands were hurt in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver.

Along with distracted driving, Mariah's Act addresses NHTSA's two core missions: vehicle safety and highway safety. By improving these areas, we hope to continue to reduce traffic fatalities and reduce damage when accidents do occur.

While I was pleased to hear that the number of traffic fatalities fell 3 percent between 2009 and 2010, there were still over 32,000 traffic fatalities throughout our country in 2011. I believe we can do better to lower the number of deaths on our roadways by consistently improving safety.

Lifesaving protections for children and young drivers are key components of this bill. This is important because motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all Americans ages 5 to 34. As a parent of two teenagers, I know the fears of first transporting your children, and then seeing them get behind the wheel. Because vehicular accidents are so deadly to our young people, I was pleased to introduce a bill with strong protections for our youth.

Another specific issue that Mariah's Act addresses is a problem we have been facing for a long time, impaired driving. Impaired driving still remains a deadly problem across the country. In 2010, 31 percent of all fatal crashes were alcohol-related, and more than 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. We, as a country, should be taking a strong stance for ending this behavior and Mariah's Act helps develop the laws and technology to do it.

Other provisions in this bill include updates and consolidation of highway safety programs; ensuring emerging electronics and technologies in vehicles are safe; and improved transparency and accountability in vehicle investigations.

Along with NHTSA, the Commerce section of this Highway bill includes provisions of two bills I introduced last year, the Commercial Driver Compliance Improvement Act and the Safe Roads Act of 2011.

The Commercial Driver Compliance Improvement Act will help authorities improve compliance with hours-of-service regulations that keep fatigued commercial truck and bus drivers off the road.

The Safe Roads Act will establish a national clearinghouse for verified positive alcohol and drug test results of commercial motor vehicle operators. This will prevent a bad actor from failing a drug test in one State and simply going across a State line to try to beat the test.

Our safety is compromised everyday by those bad acting truck and bus drivers that are fatigued or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. We needed to strengthen our current regulations to ensure these drivers cannot bypass the law. These provisions are a practical

way to ensure that the commercial driving industry is reducing the number of unsafe drivers on the road.

Last year, there were over 5 million accidents on our roads resulting in over 32,000 lives lost. That is why we need to continue to fine tune highway safety programs to better target prevention, enforcement and oversight. I am pleased that all three of these provisions were included in this Highway bill and that they will help reduce the number of tragedies families face due to automobile related deaths and injuries.

I would like to thank everyone for their input and believe that we have a bill that will complete the goal of increasing safety on our roadways.

TRIBUTE TO INDIANA CHIEF JUSTICE RANDALL T. SHEPARD

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Indiana Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard, who is retiring this month after 25 years of distinguished service as Indiana's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Justice Shepard was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court by Governor Robert Orr in 1985 and became Chief Justice in 1987, then the youngest chief justice in the nation. During his career, he has authored nearly 900 civil and criminal opinions and 68 law review articles. His writings have been cited hundreds of times by law journals and other courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

Justice Shepard's leadership and idealism are recognized beyond his legal opinions. Under his tenure, the court adopted a more balanced workload of civil and criminal cases and began webcasting all of its oral arguments. In 2001, he created the Courts in the Classroom program, which helps students learn about the judiciary, and was a driving force behind the Indiana Conference for Legal Education Opportunity program which promotes diversity in the legal profession. In 2007, Justice Shepard was appointed by Governor Mitch Daniels as co-chair of the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform, and several of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented.

A seventh-generation Hoosier, Justice Shepard grew up in Evansville, IN, and graduated cum laude from Princeton in 1969. He received his law degree from Yale Law School in 1972. Among other awards, Justice Shepard has received the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Government Leader of the Year, the American Judicature Society's Opperman Award, and the Indiana Black Expo Lifetime Achievement Award. He has honorary degrees from the University of Southern Indiana, the University of South Carolina, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Evansville.

I appreciate this opportunity to recognize Justice Shepard, and I wish him every continuing success as he pursues new challenges and opportunities.

RECOGNIZING CIRCUS SMIRKUS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Circus Smirkus, the award-winning international touring youth circus based out of Greensboro, VT. A treasured Vermont institution, renowned well beyond our borders, this year Circus Smirkus is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Circus Smirkus was founded by Rob Mermin, who ran away to join the circus at the age of 19 when summer camps for aspiring performers did not exist. Upon moving to Greensboro in 1987, Rob started the program to promote the culture and skills of the circus and to inspire youth to enter the arts and experience the adventure of a traveling show.

Today Circus Smirkus is the only youth circus in America to put on a full-season tour under its own big top, a 750-seat, one-ring, European-style circus tent. Every summer, a company of talented troupers, ages 10 to 18, arrives and rehearses the show at Smirkus's headquarters in the Circus Barn in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Then 30 young clowns, aerialists and acrobats take the show on the road, staging more than 70 performances across New England in just 7 weeks.

The program is a complete immersion in circus life, including long hours, rigorous training, and daily chores. Most graduates—known as Smirkos—describe their experiences as life-changing and as having forged some of their most cherished memories. The young performers come from as far away as Mongolia, New Zealand, and Siberia. Since its founding the circus has fostered youth exchanges with more than 25 nations.

Marcel Marceau, the famed French mime, broke his silence to call Circus Smirkus “an absolutely wonderful task: to bring children hope for the future, to create an entirely new form of circus and make it universal.” He was so right. I see the skill they develop in young performers and the joy they bring to every audience—including Marcelle and me when we take our grandchildren each summer in Vermont. I wish Circus Smirkus the best for this special milestone season and in all the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND HURMON E. HAMILTON, JR.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the Reverend Hurmon E. Hamilton, Jr. of Roxbury, MA, a remarkable pastor, teacher and leader. Reverend Hamilton grew up in Louisiana, the son of a preacher. He attended Grambling State University and went on to earn a Master of Divinity Degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

In 1994, Reverend Hamilton began his career in Massachusetts when he was elected Senior Pastor of Boston's Roxbury Presbyterian Church. In this