

money coming to the Federal Treasury to be spent on a variety of different things, it will stay where the injury occurred, along the gulf coast, and 80 percent of that money will stay in those coastal areas and those coastal States, helping our economies to revive ourselves and to save our coastlines.

So gulf coast House Members, I am speaking and hoping some of them will hear this message. Gulf coast House Members of either party, Democrats or Republicans, should stand tall and say: Yes, let's pass the Senate Transportation bill for the benefits that will come to our State and our Nation, creating or securing literally almost overnight 1.9 million jobs for the country, helping our recovery. But tucked into the Transportation bill is a bill that could bring billions of dollars to the gulf coast to help with coastal restoration and beach erosion.

I have seen the clips every day since we passed RESTORE, from Tampa, FL, to Mobile, AL, to Jackson, MS, to Gulfport, MS, to the Times Picayune in New Orleans, to the Houston Chronicle, and as faraway newspapers as the New York Times which have editorialized on: Pass the RESTORE Act now; bring jobs and economic relief to the gulf coast, an area and environment that has been hard hit by the 5 million barrels of oil that were spilled in the gulf. Next month, it will be the 2-year anniversary.

I don't know what the House of Representatives is thinking. They have a real jobs bill over there right now, voted on by Republicans and Democrats here, not just a few Republicans. I think more than half the Republicans in the Senate joined with us to pass this bill. In addition, it has the RESTORE Act in it. As the Presiding Officer knows, he had a great hand in supporting the part of that effort to fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund which will provide money to all the States for park restoration and maintenance and for land purchase with willing sellers.

So I am on the floor to support BARBARA BOXER, to support JIM INHOFE, to say to the House: Take the Senate Transportation bill. Take it now. It is good for all your States and for the gulf coast House Members particularly. The RESTORE Act is very bipartisan and bicameral. Theirs is a RESTORE Act very similar to ours. Please, let's join together, stop procrastinating, and pass this bill.

We have had many supporters of this bill. The chamber of commerce has put out messages to everyone today:

The Chamber strongly supports this important legislation . . . Passing surface transportation reauthorization legislation is a specific action Congress and the Administration can take right now to support job growth and economic productivity without adding to the deficit.

I wish to say one word about this extension. Extensions are not benign. As Senator BOXER told us today, extensions in some States aren't worth the

paper this extension will be written on because we know that most of these projects are funded by approximately 75 percent Federal money, 25 percent local. In the old days when States were flush with cash and people were running surpluses, when we messed up in Congress as we are messing up now and not giving them the Transportation bill on time, some of our States could just dip into their local money, keep their projects going, waiting for us to do our job.

Those days are over. Do you know any State in the Union running a massive surplus right now? Do you know any State anywhere? I don't. Because States have drawn down their reserves. They are running on very tight budgets because they are all coming out of this recession. Even our State that has a very low unemployment rate relative to everybody else, that never experienced the recession as everyone else did, is still running pretty sizeable deficits at the State level. I can tell you, my State doesn't have any extra cash to front the Federal Government.

When these projects run out and don't get reauthorized, a lot of these transportation projects will come to a halt. States will stop buying right-of-way. They will cancel or put on hold what is under contract until the money comes forward. So I am going to be in touch specifically with the State of Louisiana on how this is going to work in our State, but we were told today that there are a handful of States that have already started to put out notices to their contractors: There will be no more paychecks associated with this road project or this bridge project or this mass transit project.

Let me show everyone what I do know about our State. These are the grades we get from the Civil Engineering Association. I am not proud of these grades. But the reason I am not too embarrassed is because just about every State has these same grades because, overall, America's infrastructure generally is graded at a D. We are the most advanced country in the world but get a D rating when it comes to our infrastructure, surface transportation, water infrastructure, dams, levees, et cetera.

Our airports in Louisiana are C. Our levees, despite the huge investment the Federal Government has made recently, but because of the longstanding overall long-term disinvestment or lower investment over time, we still have a C. We have more bridge surface than almost any State in America—I think we are third—and we have a D-minus. We have more ports; in fact, Mississippi's southern port from Plaquemine to Baton Rouge is one of the largest in the world, definitely the largest in the country, a C-minus, and our roads are D.

Senator BOXER has been on the floor now all week, and I am joining her and helping her tell the House of Representatives they are playing with fire. They are playing with dynamite. We

have to get this Transportation bill out. I am sure other States can benefit from this bill. If we don't, this will be the ninth short-term extension since 2009.

People at home must think we have lost our minds. The clearest thing to people at home—they may not understand, and sometimes it is hard for us to understand, all the intricacies of every issue. But everyone in America, even our children understand that to build roads we need a road crew, to build bridges we need a bridge crew, to build mass transit we have to have people actually constructing. We need jobs in America right now, yesterday, today, immediately.

Why is the House of Representatives sitting on a bill that is paid for—contrary to some comments from House Members, paid for—that will go for 2 years? It is as long as I would like. It is not 4 years, it is not 5 years, but it is 2 years. It is longer than the 60-day, 90-day extensions we have been living under since 2009. It is 2012. Let's get a transportation bill.

My final point: For the gulf coast this is critical. We have a major piece of legislation tucked inside this bill. With the Transportation bill that the Senate passes, the RESTORE Act passes with it. We create an oceans trust fund, land and water conservation with willing seller provisions, and we invest billions of dollars in the gulf coast. It is a real jobs bill, not a pretend jobs bill. It is a real jobs bill. It means everything to our States. Whether one has a Republican or a Democratic Governor, they are waiting on us to pass this bill so they can get their people to work. I know mayors I have spoken to, police in our State, county commissioners are waiting for this money as well so they can get plans and put people to work.

So I most certainly hope that in the next 24 hours, before we leave on Friday, the House of Representatives will pass the Senate Transportation bill, send it over to us, and let's put our people to work. It is only going to last 2 years. We can argue about the differences, about how the money should go directly to the States. We could argue about mass transit. We can debate that for the next 2 years. Let's pass the bill. Let's get it done.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, with all of the very well deserved statements that have been made about our colleague Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, I wanted to raise my voice in support of the milestone she recently achieved as the longest-serving woman in congressional history.

A personal word I want to add about Senator MIKULSKI is that she has been so supportive and such a leader of our Nation's space program. As the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and

Science, she has to be intimately familiar with the details and the appropriate way to allocate funds that are vital for our civilian program to go forward in the visionary and frontier breaking manner that it always has and I am grateful for her leadership. I wanted to add this to the accolades that she so well deserves and has already heard from so many of our colleagues.

Senator MIKULSKI began her tenure in Congress in 1977 as a member of the House of Representatives. She represented Maryland's Third District for ten years before moving to the Senate in 1986.

During her time in the Senate, Senator MIKULSKI has been a champion for many of the issues that are particularly important to my fellow Floridians and me. She is a strong supporter of veterans' and seniors' issues.

Senator MIKULSKI has also worked to protect our oceans by supporting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, especially during one of the worst environmental disasters we've seen. In 2010 she conducted a subcommittee hearing to explore the use of dispersants in response to the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf, helping us to better understand the long-term consequences of that environmental tragedy.

Senator MIKULSKI also serves as Chairman for the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee on Children and Families. In December, she chaired a hearing on child abuse, casting light on this issue and urging her colleagues to take greater steps to combat it.

I am honored to have served with Senator MIKULSKI for the past decade, and I look forward to continuing to work with her on matters of great importance to Maryland, Florida, and the rest of the country.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in honoring the service of the Senator from Maryland, BARBARA MIKULSKI, on becoming the longest-serving woman in the history of Congress. She is an inspiration, a mentor, and a friend, and I congratulate her on achieving this historic milestone.

The story of BARBARA MIKULSKI is the story of the American Dream. The daughter of a grocer in Baltimore, she learned what it meant to do a hard day's work. She got good grades, went to college, and eventually got her Master's Degree in Social Work.

When she was in her 20's, she got involved in a fight to stop a highway proposal that would have cut through a working-class neighborhood. She stopped that highway and saved the homes of the families who lived there.

Those families saw something that day that all of us would recognize today: a woman of passion, hard work, and determination.

Throughout her years of service, she has reflected these values day in and day out as she has fought for America's

working families. She understands that our country needs to make things and grow things if we are going to have a middle class and an American Dream. She understands the dignity of work, and how important that is to families who want to create a better future for their children, just as BARBARA's family did for her.

And in her many years of leadership and service, she has been fighting every day to create a better future for every little girl and boy in Maryland. She did not come here for the power; she came here to serve. And I think that is why the people of Maryland have chosen her, time and time again, to be their champion in the U.S. Senate.

In the whole history of the United States, 1,931 people have served in the U.S. Senate. Of those, 39 were women. And of those, 17 are serving right now. And of those, only one—Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI—is our Dean and our mentor.

I want to thank my friend, Senator MIKULSKI, for all she has done for me and for all the women who will follow in her footsteps in the years to come.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, the Senate is in the midst of recognizing a very important milestone in our history. I would like to join my Senate colleagues in congratulating Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI as the longest serving female Member of Congress.

As we all know, Senator MIKULSKI has dedicated her life to public service. Before running for public office, Senator MIKULSKI worked as a social worker helping at-risk children and educating seniors on Medicare. In 1971, she successfully ran for her first public office and was elected to serve in the Baltimore City Council, where she served for 5 years.

Senator MIKULSKI first ran for Congress in 1976, seeking to represent Maryland's Third District. She won that race and went on to hold the seat for a decade. In 1986 she decided to run for the U.S. Senate, and she has been serving here ever since. The Senate was a very different place when she first arrived as one of two women Senators. She not only had to learn how the Senate functioned but had a quick lesson in bipartisanship—as the other woman, Nancy Kassebaum-Baker, was a Republican from Kansas. Today, we have 17 women in the Senate and 76 women serving in the House of Representatives.

Senator MIKULSKI has been an outspoken advocate for working people everywhere. Due in large part to her leadership and strong advocacy on behalf of women, our daughters and granddaughters will have opportunities that were not available to many women in the past. She is a wonderful role model through her dedication to public service, as she fights passionately every day for the people of Maryland that she is here to represent.

And so I want to add my voice to those praising Senator MIKULSKI as she reaches this important milestone. She

is a true pioneer, a strong example of a smart legislator, and an outspoken voice for working people. I have great respect for the journey she has taken, and I am proud to serve alongside her.

JOBS ACT

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on H.R. 3606, the JOBS Act, which we passed in the Senate last Thursday, March 22, 2012 by a vote of 73-26. I am very pleased that this legislation passed with such strong bipartisan support, particularly because it includes a measure which I authored to update the shareholder threshold before which banks must register their securities with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Title VI of the JOBS Act is based off of S. 1941, which I introduced on December 5, 2011 with Senator MARK PRYOR. Section 601 of this title increases the registration threshold for banks and bank holding companies to 2,000 persons and the deregistration threshold to 1,200 person.

As the author of Title VI of the JOBS Act, I welcome today's consideration of H.R. 3606 in the House of Representatives and the endorsement that President Obama has given this job-creating legislation in a Statement of Administration Policy. The new thresholds for registration and deregistration are effective upon the President's signature since no rulemaking is necessary. It is the intent of Congress that this new law should apply immediately to banks and bank holding companies so that they can raise additional capital to increase lending in their communities.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment today to recognize the dedication of women service members and women veterans in celebration of Women's History Month.

Women have played an important role in our Nation's military from the time of our Founding Fathers. Today, women make up 15 percent of the Active-Duty military and 18 percent of Guard and Reserve forces. Our women soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen have served courageously in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have played a variety of roles ranging from convoy leaders to fighter pilots to field medics. I am inspired by their bravery and their dedication to our country.

Already women make up nearly 10 percent of the veteran population, a proportion that Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, expects to grow over the next decade. VA has already come a long way in addressing the unique health needs and challenges that women face. A generation ago, VA would have been the last place that we would associate with women's health, but just this past January, VA marked an important milestone in caring for