

Even though my friend, who is one of the leaders of the tea party movement around the country, has thrown a monkey wrench into what we are doing on a postal bill—moving to some foreign relations matter—it is too bad. It cheapens what we are trying to do, and it is unfortunate for millions of people in America.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 312, S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is pending.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, will the Senator from Vermont yield for 2 minutes?

Mr. SANDERS. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, what we have just witnessed is an example of why the Senate is too often tied into knots. We have a bill that is critical to every one of our States that is pending, the postal reform bill. The leader tried to move this bill forward by saying: Let's stick to amendments relevant to the bill, which is a pretty broad standard, a lot broader than a germaneness standard. Then there is an objection to that because there is another matter which the Senator from Kentucky rightfully has an interest in. We all have an interest in various matters around here, many of which are \$2 billion or more in terms of cost. But that amendment by the Senator from Kentucky is not relevant to this bill, and unless, he says, he gets his way and has a 15-minute debate on a \$2 billion subject, he is going to object to us addressing a subject which involves every one of our States.

This is why we have so many difficulties, at times at least, moving forward in the Senate. Because any one of us at any time can object to moving legislation that is relevant and amendments that are relevant in order to get his or her way on a totally unrelated amendment.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, since I have been referred to, may I interject with a question?

Mr. LEVIN. I asked to be yielded 2 minutes. That would be up to the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. PAUL. Could I interject with a—

Mr. LEVIN. I just wish to simply say that then what happens is that then the majority leader is forced to fill the tree. That creates problems on the other side because the tree is filled. But that is in response to an unwillingness on the part of the Senator to let us proceed on a bill which is important to every one of us with relevant amendments. So we have a response from that Senator to the determination of the majority leader to move forward with a bill that affects all of us.

Objecting to a UC, the majority leader is forced to fill the tree, and we are off and running.

So for 2 days around here—for 2 days around here now—we are going to go through the same thing we go through almost every single week. We will have amendments which will be sought to be offered. We have to set aside amendments. We get to a cloture vote. We end up with a far more restrictive standard than if we were allowed to proceed with relevant amendments. We end up with a germaneness standard, a lot narrower than the relevance standard which was proposed by the majority leader.

This was a self-defeating action, I believe, in objecting to a unanimous consent proposal which would allow us to proceed with relevant amendments. It does not accomplish the aim of the Senator from Kentucky because we are not going to get to that subject, and all it does is restrict the rest of us who are trying to offer relevant amendments in the next few days. It is a real example of what the problem is around this Senate.

Mr. PAUL. Will the Senator yield for a question? Since I am being characterized, I would think I would be allowed a response.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, regular order. Under the order that was entered, the Senator from Vermont is to be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Thank you, Mr. President.

The Senator from Tennessee has requested 2 or 3 minutes to make a point, and I am happy to yield some of my time, after which I would get the floor back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I object in order to ask a question as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request of the Senator from Vermont?

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That the Senator from Tennessee be recognized and then that the Senator—

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. I wish to ask a question, Mr. President.

Mr. REID. Regular order, Mr. President.

Mr. SANDERS. I apologize to the Senator from Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request of the Senator from Vermont?

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Vermont has the floor.

Mr. SANDERS. I do apologize to my friend from Tennessee.

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM

I want to just continue and talk about what the managers' amendment does. I went over a number of criteria by which it strengthens our ability to protect rural post offices, and that is

something I think many of us from rural America want to see happen. We understand how important rural post offices are to the heart and soul of small communities.

The Lieberman-Collins bill took us a good way forward. This amendment goes further.

I should say that while I think the managers' amendment is a step forward in almost every instance, I believe that through the amendment process we can strengthen the bill even further. I intend to be working with many of my colleagues to do just that.

So we talked a little bit about strengthening the ability of rural post offices to continue to exist.

Second issue: The managers' amendment protects regional overnight delivery standards. The managers' amendment requires that the Postal Service retain a modified overnight delivery standard for 3 years, ensuring that communities across the country continue to receive overnight delivery of first-class mail—a very significant step forward for small businesses and for people throughout our country.

A maximum delivery standard of 3 days would also be maintained for first-class mail sent anywhere in the continental United States. Originally, the Postmaster General had suggested maybe we could lengthen the time from 3 days to 5 days. We keep it at 3 days.

The retention of—and this is important for every Member of the Senate concerned about the employment situation—the retention of a modified overnight delivery standard would result in at least 100 mail processing facilities remaining open that are now scheduled to be closed.

No. 3, the managers' amendment makes it harder to eliminate 6-day delivery. The substitute amendment would prohibit the Postal Service from implementing any plan to eliminate Saturday delivery for at least 2 years. After 2 years, Saturday delivery could only be eliminated if the Postal Service has first attempted to increase revenue and cut costs through other means and the GAO and the Postal Regulatory Commission conclude that eliminating Saturday delivery is necessary for the long-term solvency of the Postal Service.

Fourth, and very important—something I and many other Members feel strongly about—the Postal Service needs a new business model. Let me—and I know the Presiding Officer, the Senator from Minnesota, has been very interested in all these postal issues. Right now, if one walks into a post office and they say to a postal clerk: Hi. I would like to give you \$2 to notarize this letter, the postal clerk would say: It is against the law for me to do that. I can't take your \$2.

Mr. SANDERS. Postal Clerk, can you make 10 copies of this letter?

Nope; it is against the law for me to do that.

Rural Postal Clerk, I would like a fishing license or a hunting license. Can you help me with that?

I cannot do that. It is against the law.

I want to mail this box of wine and beer.

I cannot do that. It is against the law.

So what we want to do is take away many of the restrictions that have been imposed on the Postal Service by Congress and give them the flexibility to be more entrepreneurial to bring in more revenue. In addition to that, this managers' amendment creates a blue ribbon entrepreneurial commission. What that is about is that today we have, as the majority leader indicated, some 32,000 post offices in America. Today letter carriers are delivering mail to about 150 million doors in America. That is a huge infrastructure.

If we have some pretty smart entrepreneurial types telling us what we can do in addition to what we are doing now—what the letter carriers can do, what the post offices could do, what the Postal Service can do in terms of new products and services—can we bring in more revenue? I think we can. That is what the commission is going to be looking at.

Let me say a few words about the financial condition of the Postal Service. No one debates first-class mail is down. A lot of people now use e-mail and the Internet rather than first-class mail. There is no debate about that. But what many people, including many Members of Congress, do not fully understand is the major crisis. The major financial crisis facing the Postal Service is the fact that they have an onerous burden of having to provide \$5.5 billion every single year in future retiree health benefits—\$5.5 billion every year—which was imposed upon them in 2006.

According to the inspector general of the Postal Service, the \$44 billion in that account right now is all that it needs because when that \$44 billion accrues interest over a 20-year or so period, it will have enough money to pay out all of the future retiree health benefits that it has to do. Furthermore, there is, in general, no disagreement that the Postal Service has overpaid into the Federal Employees Retirement System by about \$11 billion and to the Civil Service Retirement Service about \$2 billion. In other words, the Postal Service is owed about \$13 billion.

So to conclude, let me say this: The Postal Service performs an enormously important function for millions of individuals and for our economy as a whole. As the majority leader indicated, there are some 8 million jobs in a variety of industries dependent upon a strong Postal Service.

I believe if the Senate is prepared to be bold, to do the right thing, we can save jobs. We do not need to lay off or to downsize the Postal Service by over 200,000 workers. We do not need to shut

down over 3,000 rural post offices. We do not need to shut down half of the processing plants in America and slow down mail delivery service leading to an eventual death cycle for the Postal Service.

So the task before us is a huge one. To tell you the truth—and I speak as an Independent, the longest serving Independent in congressional history—this is not a Democratic issue; this is not a Republican issue. Republicans and Democrats have rural post offices. All know how important they are. All want to save jobs in the middle of a recession. All want the Postal Service to be strong.

So I would hope we can work together. We had a good vote a few hours ago—74 votes. I would hope we could work together to save the Postal Service, make it strong, and make sure it is there for our kids and our grandchildren.

At this point, if the Senator from Tennessee would like some time, I am happy to yield to him 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Senator from Vermont. This is a body that operates by unanimous consent, which is a hard thing to get accustomed to until you have ever been a part of it. That means any one of us can stop the Senate from opening or having a prayer or saying the Pledge of Allegiance or going to a bill.

What I am about to say, I do not want in any way to diminish the rights of any Senator, such as the Senator from Kentucky, to have an opportunity to object to a unanimous consent request. But when everyone has a lot of rights, unless we have some agreement, it is hard to get much done.

I have been sometimes critical of the majority leader, but I have also tried to support and praise him for things he has done when I can because I know that either being the Democratic or the Republican leader is not an easy job. So I want to commend the majority leader for offering to accept all relevant amendments, which is a broad category, and this bill seems particularly appropriate for that because we have competing visions for what to do about the post office.

It has gone through committee, the regular order, and the bill is bipartisan. There are not a lot of partisan differences. There are a lot of differences, and they need to be worked out. We have probably 2 weeks to do it. So this is a ripe situation for that if we can get consent to do it.

I am disappointed the majority leader felt he had to go on and offer cloture to move on because he already had control of the situation with the right to fill the tree. So I would hope we could respect the right of the Senator from Kentucky and that of other Senators to offer unanimous consent—to object to unanimous consent agreements but see if we cannot find some way to move ahead with an agreement on relevant amendments.

That means the majority leader does not pick the amendments; we all get to offer them if they are relevant. The majority leader has a difficult job. So I hope as he reflects on this matter he will consider that it is much easier to get an agreement for relevant amendments in our caucus—I do not know what it is like in the Democratic caucus—if we are able to talk it through a little bit and secure consent for that before it is offered.

That would be the job of Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader. So here we are. We were on the postal bill for 5 full minutes, and now we are off on a wrong track. We can move back very easily. The majority leader has the ability to control any amendment through his filling the tree and does not need the cloture amendment. Hopefully, the Senators on this side will carefully consider the offer of all relevant amendments. That would give us a chance to offer many amendments.

It is the right of any Senator to object. But as one Senator, I appreciate the gesture, and I hope the majority leader will give Senator MCCONNELL an opportunity, if he wants it—I am just speaking for myself—if he wants it, to work through our caucus and see if we can get a relevant amendment agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts has the floor.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I would yield to the Senator from Michigan for 15 seconds.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Tennessee for his constructive comments. He and I have spoken about trying to work on a relevant standard at the beginning of a bill as a way of moving a bill forward with the greatest possible leniency, without getting into totally nonrelevant subjects.

I thought his comments were constructive. I wanted to thank him for it. I hope we can continue to work together on this relevance course, which is perhaps the best way to get us out of the kind of knots that we are frequently tied in. I want to thank my friend from Massachusetts.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I concur with the Senator from Tennessee. Listen, we need to step back and move back a little bit. This is a bill of which I am a cosponsor. I work very hard. I note in the majority leader's comments he referenced Senators CARPER, LIEBERMAN, and COLLINS. But I spent an equal amount of time working on this bill and I am a cosponsor. I care very deeply about our postal workers and the security and the viability of the post office itself.

I am hopeful also that the majority leader will step back because before we left we had 2 great weeks of working on relevant issues. We had the insider trading bill, which passed 96 to 3. The leader allowed us to have a couple of days to get our Members in order, not 4 hours.

We should have the ability, when we have amendments or issues that involve our Members—they should have the right to bring them forward in any form they want, and we should have the ability to get together with them before we move on to another totally different, very important issue, such as the Violence Against Women Act, of which I am also a cosponsor. So I do not care which one we go to.

But this one is relevant. It is time sensitive. It needs to be addressed right away. I have been honored to work with Senator CARPER once again and Senator LIEBERMAN once again and Senator COLLINS once again, working on something that can be very important and will be very important for our country.

We are here today because the post office is clearly at a crossroads. They are in deep trouble. For more than two centuries it has played a key role in both our economy and our communities, and for decades communities large and small and citizens far and wide have come to depend on the regular and dependable mail service 6 days a week for a reasonable price.

It is plain and simple that in the past a steady volume of mail has provided that adequate revenue. But things have changed. Yet in the face of the technological changes and difficult economic conditions, first-class mail volume, as we know, has dropped by over one-quarter in the last 5 years. It is forecasted to do the same thing over the next 5 years, and the business model that proved successful for generations is now sinking the Postal Service in a pool of red ink.

As we all know, they have lost over \$13 billion—billion dollars—in the last 2 years. They are almost on the verge of bankruptcy. As we know, the workforce is too big, costs are too high, and operations are being maintained that are unequal to the revenue that is actually coming in. We need to stop that right away. The number of delivery addresses increases every day, and the Postal Service's liability to its employees grows each and every day. The longer we wait, the more difficult it becomes. We are up against a deadline. We do need to work together in a bipartisan, bicameral manner.

This is not about Democrats and Republicans or Independents. It is about us as a body showing once again—trying to reestablish that trust with the American people—that, my goodness, the Senate can do things together, as we did with the crowdfunding jobs bill, as we did with the Arlington Cemetery bill, as we have done with the 3-percent withholding, and as we have done most recently with the insider trading. We can do these things. This is a no-brainer.

Everybody here agrees we need to save the post office, and we all have some very real concerns: rural concerns, city concerns, everybody has concerns. We should have the ability to have these aired, and we need to do it right now.

I would once again encourage the majority leader to step back from the path he has chosen to move on to another bill because one Member had a deep concern about what is happening in Egypt, as many of us do. Would it hurt to give him his 15 minutes and then move on? I just do not get it. It is such a disservice to the American people.

We need to put the Postal Service on the path to solvency right away—right away. The bill that has been brought here has been worked on between our four offices probably 300 or 400 hours easy. Throw in the office hours for all our staff, it is probably upwards of 1,000 hours we have been working on this bill.

This is something I speak to our constituents of, working with Congressman LYNCH in Massachusetts and others, to try to make sure we can have a plan, a good base, a good starting point. We may not agree on everything. But I will tell you, we all agree we need to save the U.S. Postal Service. We need to give them the tools and the resources to do their job and be viable and competitive into the new century. We all agree on that.

So we have a little hiccup, then we are going to move on to another bill. Once again, it is just as important, and I am happy to move on to it. I am a cosponsor. But come on. We deserve to give the American people better. We should be doing better. We need to recognize and address right away the serious financial condition of the post office and provide it with the flexibility to cut costs but do so in a way that is responsible to its employees and considerate of the customers who are continuing to use their service, to grant them the ability to find ways to increase revenue and innovate without competing with private industry or giving them an unfair advantage over private industry. That is a good thing.

We also want to make sure rates do not rise abruptly. That is also a good thing. We need to ensure that the Postal Service maintains a certain standard of service so it will have business and individuals who want to continue to use that service.

It is a delicate balancing act, with little disagreement on that. There is also little disagreement that the current size in both workforce and postal operations is neither sustainable nor required for the long term. We must reduce costs and we need to have greater efficiencies, and they must be found if the Postal Service is to survive and thrive in the future. The Postal Service still plays a significant role in our economy; we all know it. There is a standard they have to hit, and we all demand it.

I fear that if we don't pass this bill, the Postal Service will continue to advocate for a more aggressive approach. We are up against a deadline. If we fail to address this, the Postmaster General will have the ability to do things that I think will not be in the best in-

terests of everybody in this Chamber and the American citizens. We can provide different tools that he would be able to use, and we would be able to have input on that.

In Massachusetts, the Postal Service has made plans to close four main processing facilities and dozens of post offices. Yet there has been a lack of detailed explanation provided to government leaders—me and others—and employees or the surrounding communities to fully justify these changes as both necessary and prudent. We can do better and should do better.

Eliminating the overnight delivery standard or days of delivery will be transformational shifts in service. We don't know whether those are appropriate. Little is known about the combined impact these major changes will have on the postal customers or future revenues.

Mr. President, as we know, volume declines means decreased revenue for some and driving costs up and getting those costs under control are driving users away at alarming rates. These plans require a thoughtful consideration of alternative solutions, public input, and cautious implementation. We have, in fact, done that with our bill. We have sat down, as I said, for more hours than I can tell you trying to work through every issue. We have met with the players ad nauseam to try to make sure we address each and every consideration, including Members of this Chamber. There are Members on the other side who have their own ideas how to fix this. We have amendments here, also, and people want to address their issues.

Since when do we bring up a bill and do it in a day—especially something like this, which is so massive and affects so many people and an entire industry. We are going to do it in a day or 2 days. Even when we did insider trading, we did it in 4 or 5 days. This bill, I figure, is a good 6 to 8 days of hard-core debating, letting people come up with ideas for trying to rescue this important industry.

I and others in this Chamber want the postal employees to be treated fairly. We recognize their dedication and their service in this bill. We have over 100,000 employees eligible for retirement today. Rather than advocating for layoff authority, our bill provides a means for the Postal Service to increase attrition rates through buyouts and separation incentives to leave the post office voluntarily and with dignity. That is deeply important to me.

Additional provisions in the bill include long-overdue improvements to the Federal Workers' Compensation Program, a more affordable schedule of prefunding the retiree health benefit trust fund, and encouraging eligible retirees to join the Medicare rolls.

These are no doubt difficult times for the Postal Service, and some very tough choices are going to be made. So far in this legislative session, the Senate has shown that there are issues, as

I said in my presentation, on which we can find bipartisan solutions. In closing, I am confident this is one of them, and I look forward to having our bill heard and we get back on track, have the leader step back and allow us to come up with an agreement of relevant amendments and do the people's business.

I am grateful for the leadership Senators LIEBERMAN, COLLINS, and CARPER have shown on this issue over the years. I look forward to working on this bill with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, before the Senator speaks, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to follow the remarks of the Senator from Rhode Island.

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

The Senator from Rhode Island.

STUDENT LOAN AFFORDABILITY ACT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, we are engaged in a very important debate while the clock is ticking on literally the future of the postal service.

I want to alert my colleagues to another issue that is rapidly approaching. On July 1, if we do not act, the interest rate on subsidized student loans will be doubling from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent, impacting more than 7 million students, including more than 36,000 in Rhode Island.

I have introduced legislation—the Student Loan Affordability Act—to stop the doubling of student loan interest rates as of July 1 of this year. Many of my colleagues have already joined me, including Senators BEGICH, SHERROD BROWN, DURBIN, FRANKEN, TIM JOHNSON, KLOBUCHAR, LEAHY, MURRAY, SANDERS, SCHUMER, STABENOW, WHITEHOUSE, and WYDEN, as cosponsors of the legislation. I thank them and urge all of my colleagues to join us in supporting this legislation.

If we don't act, the average borrower will have to pay approximately \$2,800 more in interest on their loans. Students who take out the maximum \$23,000 in subsidized student loans could owe approximately \$5,000 more over the 10-year repayment period. Students and families simply cannot absorb these costs in this tough economy and in the face of rising tuition and dwindling State support for higher education.

This particular measure will hit middle-income families very hard because they are the ones who rely significantly on these subsidized student loans. The subsidized student loan program is a need-based financial aid program. To get the low rate and the in-school interest subsidy, students must demonstrate economic need. Nearly 60 percent of the dependent students who qualify for these loans come from families with incomes of less than \$60,000. That is literally the middle class and the working poor of this country.

This is an issue of fairness. At a time, ironically, of historically low in-

terest rates, when the Federal Reserve has set the target interest rate for Federal funds between 0 and .25 percent—the Fed is lending money to banks at near zero percent. We, at the same time, are asking middle-income families to pay twice as much, 6.8 percent—a huge discrepancy—in the loans they pay for education.

We also recognize—all of us—that the key to our future is an educated America. It seems that given the interest rate environment, where banks can get money overnight at near zero percent interest and we are telling students they have to pay 6.8, not 3.4, it doesn't make sense. It is in our national interest to ensure that students not only get educated but don't leave school with a mountain of debt.

We need more students graduating from our colleges, universities, and professional schools because that will power our economy in the future. We won't be globally competitive if we don't do this.

In 1980 the gap between the lifetime earnings of a college graduate and high school graduate was 40 percent. In 2010 it was 74 percent. By 2025 it is projected to be 96 percent. The message is clear: If you cannot get postsecondary education, you are virtually going to be condemned to being far behind in terms of income and ability to support your family. Researchers have found that since at least the 1980s, we haven't been producing a sufficient number of college-educated workers to meet the demand of industry. If you go to businesses throughout Rhode Island and the Nation, they will tell you they have jobs for which they cannot find the people with the high-level skills needed to fill them. So every available criterion argues strenuously for this legislation.

In Rhode Island, we have 41 percent of our working adults who have college degrees. By 2018 it is estimated that 61 percent of the jobs there will require some postsecondary education. We have a 20-percent gap that has already opened in the next 4 years, and we have to fill it. The wrong way to fill it is to make college more expensive.

I recently had a roundtable with all of the presidents of my universities and colleges in Rhode Island. They said that keeping this interest rate relatively low is absolutely critical. They are all worried about the fact that by July 1, unless we act, we will see a doubling of this interest rate.

Frankly, this is an issue that has had bipartisan support. In 2007, on a very strong, bipartisan basis, we enacted the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, cutting the interest rate from 6.8 to 3.4 percent. In the Senate, the legislation passed on a 79-to-12 vote, with more than two-thirds of Republican Senators—34 out of 49—supporting it. President George W. Bush signed it into law.

We have to revive, before July 1, that bipartisan spirit that motivated the initial legislation so that we can avoid

doubling the interest rate college students will pay for these loans. It is a matter of major priorities for us—not just for a short time but for the future of the country. We have 75 days. The clock is ticking. We have to move. If we don't, millions of middle-class students and families will be denied the opportunity to effectively get a higher education.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to comment on our failure to move forward with debate and discussion and amendments on this very important bill. The sponsors of the legislation and I may have very different proposals to address this compelling issue, but neither the sponsors nor I believe we should not have debate, discussion, and amendment.

Unfortunately, again, because of a requirement by Members that their amendment be voted on, apparently, the majority leader will now move on, fill the tree, amendments will not be allowed, and we will move on to other legislation. This affects 500-some-thousand American employees. We are talking about tens of billions of dollars. We are talking about an urgent need to restructure and reform the postal system in America. So now, because of demands of Senators to have votes on nongermane amendments, we will now move on to other legislation. I wonder when we will address the issue. May 15 is a very critical date in this whole scenario.

I would like to talk a bit about my proposal, and that basically is modeled after the bill that is pending in the other body, the House of Representatives.

Yesterday the Washington Post editorial said, "The time for real postal reform is now." It begins:

For anyone who still does not quite grasp the technologically obsolescent U.S. Postal Service's calamitous financial situation, here are a few facts from Thursday's Government Accountability Office report.

Before I go through that, I will quote from a Washington Post article from November 18. It specifically refers to the pending legislation. It says:

The 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2011, proposed by Senators Joseph I. Lieberman and Susan Collins and passed last week by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, is not a bill to save the U.S. Postal Service. It is a bill to postpone saving the Postal Service.

The service's announcement that it lost \$5.1 billion in the most recent fiscal year was billed as good news, which suggests how dire its situation is. The only reason the loss was not greater is that Congress postponed the USPS's payment of \$5.5 billion to prefund retiree health benefits. According to the Government Accountability Office, even \$50 billion would not be enough to repay all of the Postal Service's debt and address current and future operating deficits that are caused by its inability to cut costs quickly enough to match declining mail volume and revenue.

The Collins-Lieberman bill, which transfers \$7 billion from the Federal Employee

Retirement System to the USPS—to be used for offering buyouts to its workers and paying down debts—can stave off collapse for a short time at best.

I point out that this is the Washington Post's view and the GAO's view, not necessarily that of this Senator.

Nor do the other measures in the bill offer much hope. The bill extends the payment schedule for the Postal Service to prefund its employee retirement benefits from 10 to 40 years. Yes, the funding requirement is onerous, but if the USPS cannot afford to pay for these benefits now, what makes it likely they will be able to pay later when mail volumes most likely will have plummeted further?

The article goes on to talk about one of the favorite tactics around here—more studies.

The bill also requires two more years of studies to determine whether a switch to five-day delivery would be viable.

I have to repeat that for my colleagues. We need to study for 2 years as to whether we need to reduce mail delivery from 6 days to 5 days. Isn't that marvelous. Isn't that marvelous—2 years to study. What it is is delaying what is absolutely necessary; that is, to have 5-day-a-week delivery.

One of my colleagues said it might keep someone from getting a newspaper in the mail. We are talking about \$50 billion short, and we can't even reduce the number of days which has been recommended by the Postmaster General himself, so we are going to have 2 years to study whether we should switch to 5-day-a-week and whether that would be viable.

Continuing to quote from the Washington Post article:

These studies would be performed by a regulatory body that has already completed a laborious inquiry into the subject, a process that required almost a year.

So it will actually take 3 years.

This seems a pointless delay, especially given that a majority of Americans support the switch to five-day delivery.

We are sympathetic to Congress's wish to avoid killing jobs. And the bill does include provisions we have supported—such as requiring arbitrators to take the Postal Service's financial situation into account during collective bargaining and demanding a plan for providing mail services at retail outlets.

But this plan hits the snooze button on many of the postal service's underlying problems. Eighty percent of the USPS's budget goes towards its workforce; many of its workers are protected by no-layoff clauses.

Our Postal Service has no-layoff clauses in its contracts. I wonder if most Americans know that.

Seven billion dollars' worth of buyouts may help to shrink the workforce, but this so-called overpayment will come from taxpayers' pockets, and it is a hefty price to pay for further delay.

There is an alternative—a bill proposed by Representative Darrell Issa, (Republican-California) that would create a supervisory body to oversee the Postal Service's finances and, if necessary, negotiate new labor contracts. The bill, which just emerged from committee, is not perfect, but it offers a serious solution that does not leave taxpayers on the hook.

I wish to read from the April 14 Washington Post editorial, which I think sums up the situation.

For better or worse, our children's children will marvel at the fact that anyone ever used to send the paper thing called "a letter." They'll be amazed to learn that we unnecessarily spent billions of dollars propping up a huge, inefficient system for moving these things around. But what would really astound future generations is that we borrowed that money and left it to them to pay it back.

There is no better description of what this bill is all about. My friends, I will be glad to go into a number of details, but it is very clear Congress and the Postal Service cannot make decisions, so what we need is the only thing we found that worked to reduce our bases in America, which was a BRAC. So what we need is a BRAC-like commission to identify those post offices and other facilities that need to be closed.

I wish to go back to what the article said about future generations. My friends, we now communicate with these. We communicate by e-mail and we communicate by tweeting and we communicate electronically in the ways we used to do with pen and paper or a typewriter. That is a fact. So we have seen a dramatic reduction in regular mail. We have seen it go down in a very dramatic fashion, which will accelerate over time. Listen, when guys my age are doing this, everybody is doing it. The fact is, everybody will be doing it, and they will not have to put a 30- or 40- or 50-cent or 60-cent stamp on a letter in order to get a message to their friends, families, business associates, et cetera.

Instead of doing as some did when the Pony Express was replaced by the railroad—trying to prop up a failing industry—let's find a graceful exit and, at the same time, preserve those functions of the Postal Service that will be around for a long time. There are functions that could stay around for a long time. But this is a dramatically changed world. We now have instant communications. We have instant news cycles, and we have today a proliferation, thank God, of information and knowledge that was unknown in previous years or in history. There are upsides and downsides to that, but the Postal Service delivering letters does not play any role in the future of information being shared and made available to citizens all over the world.

First-class mail makes up more than half of postal revenues. It is down by more than 25 percent since 2001. In the last 11 years, it is down 25 percent, and I promise that will accelerate. It continues on a downward spiral with no sign of recovery. This, combined with unsustainable 80-percent labor costs and labor contracts that contain no-layoff clauses, points to the hard reality the Postal Service is broken.

By the way, that is also the conclusion of the Government Accountability Office, which just recently issued a report entitled "Challenges Related to Restructuring the Postal Service's Retail Network." Let me quote from that report.

In 2011, the American Postal Workers Union . . . and USPS management negotiated a 4-year agreement that limits transferring employees of an installation or craft to no more than 50 miles away.

How in the world did they negotiate an agreement that they would not transfer anybody farther than 50 miles away?

If USPS management cannot place employees within 50 miles, the parties are to jointly determine what steps may be taken, which includes putting postal employees on "stand by" which occurs when workers are idled but paid their full salary due to reassignments and reorganization efforts.

I am not making that up. If someone is a postal service worker and they want to be reassigned more than 50 miles away, they cannot do it. And if they can't do it, they put employees on stand-by, and they are idled but paid their full salary due to reassignments and reorganization efforts. My friends, it helps us to understand why 80 percent of their costs are in personnel.

The GAO, in its report, makes an argument basically for a BRAC. They call it the Commission on Postal Reorganization. Quoting the GAO once again:

The proposed Commission on Postal Reorganization could broaden the current focus on individual facility closures—which are often contentious, time consuming and inefficient—to a broader network-wide restructuring, similar to the BRAC approach. In other restructuring efforts where this approach has been used, expert panels have successfully informed and permitted difficult restructuring decisions, helping to provide consensus on intractable decisions. As previously noted, the 2003 report of the President's Commission on the USPS also recommended such an approach relating to the consolidation and rationalization of USPS's mail processing and distribution infrastructure. We also reported in 2010 that Congress may want to consider this approach to assist in restructuring organizations that are facing key financial challenges.

GAO has testified that USPS cannot continue providing services at current levels without dramatic changes in its cost structure. Optimizing the USPS's mail processing network would help USPS by bringing down costs related to excess and inefficient resources.

Continuing to read from the GAO report:

Lack of flexibility to consolidate its workforce: USPS stated it must be able to reduce the size of its workforce in order to ensure its costs are less than revenue. Action in this area is important since USPS's workforce accounts for about 80 percent of its costs.

We are faced with a very difficult decision, and the amendment and substitute I have has a number of provisions. I see my friend from Connecticut is on the floor, and I know he wants to discuss this issue as well, but the fact is we are looking at a Postal Service that once upon a time was so important to the United States of America it was even mentioned in the Constitution. Since those days, and in the intervening years, the Postal Service performed an incredibly outstanding job in delivering mail and communications to our citizens all over America—

in all settings, in all parts of our country—and they deserve great credit for doing so. But now we face a technological change.

As I understand it, a huge portion of their mail now is made up of so-called junk mail, which is advertising mail. Americans in greater and greater numbers are making use of this new technology, as I pointed out, and it is time we understood that and we stopped this incredible hemorrhaging of money. According to the Postal Service itself, by 2020, they are expecting to face up to a \$238 billion shortfall. They are expecting a \$238 billion shortfall in just the next 8 years—\$238 billion. The Postal Service has reached its borrowing limit of \$15 billion. Even with dramatic cost savings of \$12 billion and workforce reduction of 110,000 postal employees in the past 4 years, the Postal Service is still losing money. In fact, the Postal Service has said it could lose as much as \$18 billion annually by 2015 if not given the necessary flexibility it needs to cut costs and transform.

What does the legislation before us do? It delays by 2 years for a study—a study—to figure out whether we should go from 6 days a week to 5 days a week. I wonder how long it would take some smart people to figure out whether we should go from a 5-day delivery versus 6 days. According to the sponsors of the bill, it takes them 2 years, after they have already studied it for 1 year. Remarkable. Remarkable.

What we need—and this is, unfortunately, testimony to the lack of political courage of Members of Congress and members of the administration—a BRAC process. We need a BRAC process, where we can appoint a number of men and women who are knowledgeable and who are willing to make these decisions for us and then those decisions would be made and it would come back for an up-or-down vote in the Congress of the United States.

I point out again, this bill before us locks in the current service standards for 3 years. It will make it impossible to go forward with the vast bulk of the Postal Service's planned network consolidation for at least 3 years. It puts in place significant new steps, including public notice and comment, before a processing plant can be closed. It gives appeal rights to the PRC for processing plant closures and gives binding authority to this PRC to keep a plant open to protect service standards.

The bill adds a number of new regulations designed to make it more difficult to close post offices. It includes a post office closure moratorium until retail service standards are created. It gives the PRC the ability to enforce a "retail service standard" which would enable the PRC to not only require appealed post offices stay open but even require new post offices to be open if a complaint is lodged.

It continues the 2-year delay before USPS can go to 5-day delivery, as I mentioned, and it removes a provision in the reported text that required arbi-

trators to take into account pay comparability in any decision. It replaces it with vague language that says "nothing in this section may be construed to limit the relevant factors that the arbitration board may take into consideration."

If that isn't vague language I don't know what is. Let me repeat it. They want the board to do nothing in this section of the legislation that could be construed to limit the relevant factors that the arbitration board may take into consideration. That is pretty good guidance, isn't it?

I could go on and on, but in summary I would just go back to the Washington Post's final paragraph of their article and repeat—and this is what this is all about, my friends.

For better or worse, our children's children will marvel at the fact that anyone ever used to send the paper thing called "a letter." They'll be amazed to learn that we unnecessarily spent billions of dollars propping up a huge, inefficient system for moving these things around. But what would really astound future generations is that we borrowed that money and left it to them to pay it back.

I thank the sponsors of this bill for the great effort they made. I think we have open and honest disagreements that deserve debate and discussion and amendments. They deserve amendments and they deserve honest debate. We are talking about the future of the Postal Service in America and we are talking about literally, over time, hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

I hope the majority leader will reconsider and allow amendments to be proposed. I hope my colleagues will not insist on a vote on a nonrelevant amendment as a condition to moving forward with legislation. That is not right either.

I have said time after time, because I have been around here for a long time, we should have people sit down, both majority and Republican leaders, and say, okay, how many amendments do you want? Which amendments do you want voted on? Give them a reasonable handful, which we did not that long ago, and then you have those votes and move forward.

This is important legislation. The Senator from Connecticut will point out that May 15 is a critical day. This issue cannot be strung out forever.

I hope we can sit down with the majority and Republican leader and come up with some amendments that would be allowed and then move forward. I don't know if my amendment will be agreed to, but I think it deserves a vote. I think it deserves debate and consideration.

Again, I thank the sponsors, three of the four of whom are on the floor, for their hard work. I look forward to the opportunity to have honest and open debate and discussion on this very important legislation. I know they and their staffs have put in hundreds and hundreds of hours of work on this legislation to bring it to the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Madam President, I agree with the statements of the Senator from Arizona about the majority leader and allowing us to actually work on relevant amendments that are important to each and every person in this Chamber, to make sure we can address those very real issues, to move not only this issue forward but to try to attempt to rescue the Post Office.

I also agree with him in his commenting on some of the deals that were cut by the Postmaster General in dealing with contracting. We actually have spoken about this many times. I asked the Postmaster General personally what was the thought process associated with entering into a contract? Did you want us to be the bad guys? What was the thought process there? Our hands are somewhat tied in dealing with some of these legislative issues.

There is nobody I respect more than the Senator who just walked out of this Chamber but I have to respectfully disagree. During our many long hours of deliberation between staff and cosponsors we wrestled with many things that were brought up in his presentation. With all due respect, I read many other articles that comment we are moving boldly to try to rescue the Post Office, taking into consideration everybody—not only the union workers but obviously the Postmaster General, the citizens—i.e., the users of the Postal Service, and everybody in this Chamber.

The impending financial crisis at the Post Office I can tell you is foremost in our minds. It was the only consideration we had, was trying to make the Post Office viable for future generations to use. That is the only consideration we had. The fact that we are here today, and I guess are not going to be able to move forward on this, is mind-boggling. But any legitimate reform of the Postal Service has to recognize we need to cut costs and streamline an organization that is too big, especially in light of the future mail volumes and the decreasing of future mail volumes. Our bill recognizes this, but where it differs from the approach of the Senator from Arizona is in our recognition of the full impact that major service changes will have on postal customers and future revenues.

The Saturday delivery service of the Post Office is one of the strongest benefits it has. When you are competing with the other entities delivering mail or delivering packages and the like, that is the leg up that the Postal Service has. We want to deliver that.

As a matter of fact, I want to address two other things. It is not the taxpayers who are paying this money. It is the ratepayers who have already paid into the system and have in fact overpaid into the Postal Service in some of their retirement issues, the retirement

program that we have. We are merely giving them that money back to allow them to get their financial house in order in order to offer some buyouts, to get these 100,000 people retired so we can reduce the cost of the Postal Service.

Once we make these changes, the Senator from Arizona also referenced that it is going to take a 2-year study? No, it is not a 2-year study to see if we are going to cut down Saturday service. They want to cut it right off. If we do all these other changes, the consideration we did in a joint and bipartisan manner was to determine whether, in fact, if we had done these, do we still need to cut the Saturday service? Which, by the way, is the benefit the Postal Service has over everybody else. Are we going to contribute to that downward spiral or are we actually going to work together and give them the little bit of flexibility, to say we have done all these changes, we don't need to cut Saturday delivery?

We still do it. We may need to streamline it. We may need to do curbside instead of going to the door. We may need to do clusters, shift it in some rural areas. But we have cut retirees. We have cut, consolidated—we have done everything. That is what the 2-year study is: If it doesn't work, we will do it. But to cut off your nose to spite your face makes no sense to me.

As the Postal Regulatory Commission has pointed out time and time again, the assumptions on customer and revenue impact as a result of these proposals have been weak at best and nonexistent at worst. We need to make sure when and if we give the Postmaster General the ability to do these certain things, he is going to do them. There are no two ways about it. He needs to draw a line in the sand and, more importantly, get everybody in the same room. I cannot imagine that our postal employees, whatever union they are from, want to have the Post Office go bankrupt and go out of business. I can't imagine there are people listening who don't want to get their cards from their grandchildren, get their checks, magazines, these things they are accustomed to.

I am listening to the Senator and I am signing letters I am going to be putting in the mail. How ironic is that. I am sitting here signing letters and the Senator, for whom I have great respect, says we communicate by this cell phone—yes, but the personal touch and that feeling of how you feel I think is best expressed right here. That is why I take the time and effort to respond, not only to my constituents, to my family and friends. Call me old fashioned. I think there is something worth saving here and that is what I am working on.

Let me say, by the way, about the Senator from Connecticut, what a legacy he is going to leave. We just did the insider trading bill. Without Senator COLLINS' and Senator LIEBERMAN's help that never would have come to

fruition, had they not actually had the guts to move that forward. What a legacy to leave.

Then to actually have another legacy, to save the United States Post Office? They may actually name it after the Senator. I will make that effort, the Joe Lieberman Post Office. That will be great.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. In Massachusetts? Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. And I will put it in Massachusetts. How about that?

You need to have a sense of humor around here. Trust me, sometimes you have to laugh at some of the things that happen here.

But in all seriousness, we need to take these drastic steps in order to provide for the economic viability of the Postal Service. In our bill, S. 1789, we will have a better way. The likelihood of the House bill passing is, I am understanding, quite remote. But there is a good likelihood that we can actually get this out first if the majority leader lets us move forward and get it out the door and put the pressure on the House to join with us in a bicameral way.

I want to say I was honored to be part of this effort to rescue the Post Office, as I have been honored to work on everything in our committee. We are going to miss the Senator very much. I said that before and I am not kidding. I know Senator COLLINS feels the same way. To do these two major pieces of legislation, I am excited to see what else we can do before the Senator leaves.

With that in mind, I will yield the floor and note I am excited to continue to work on this very important initiative. I encourage the majority leader to allow us to move forward and get this done and then we will move on to the Violence Against Women Act. As I said before, I am a cosponsor of both. As I said before, I am a cosponsor of both, so flip a coin—either way I win. It is "heads" on both sides. This is time sensitive. But it is until May 15, if I am not mistaken, in order for us to do it and have some control over these cuts; otherwise, you could see Draconian cuts, willy-nilly, with no input from us at all and no protection for our constituents.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, first I thank my friend, the Senator from Massachusetts, for his kind words about me. It has been a pleasure to work with him. He has been a great and devoted member on our committee. He introduced, along with Senator GILLIBRAND, the two bills that became the anti-insider trading bill and worked as a ranking member on the subcommittee that Senator CARPER chairs that has been working, focused on saving the United States Postal Service.

I appreciate his kind words and the stated intention, to name a post office for me. I hope he names one that is not then closed shortly thereafter. I also

thank him for doing his part personally for the Post Office by continuing to write letters and sign them.

If we all personally—I am using e-mail as much as anyone else. I am going to wander a bit here in preparing for this my last year in the Senate and how you wind things down. They actually keep our e-mails on disks. They can be stored in libraries, as you would normal memos. We do reserve the right to edit somewhat. We are privileged in that way. But so much of the communication that goes on between people on e-mail is effectively lost in the ether of cyberspace.

When you think about the richness of history, how much of history comes from letters that were written or typed over time, I think—though the trend here is clear, more and more will be done on the Internet, on e-mail—I think people are going to still want to write and receive letters. That is just one of the reasons why the Post Office should stay what it is—not what it is now but remain a viable institution which is not only important for the slightly sentimental reasons I have mentioned but because millions of jobs in our society and our country depend on the Postal Service. Although e-mail and the Internet are changing the reality of communications in our world, there are some things, in addition to mail, that will always best be done through the services of the U.S. Postal Service and not through the Internet. Some of that is the catalogs and magazines we get through the mail, but some of it is the packages, medicine, products that people buy over the Internet, that have to be delivered. Most of that is actually delivered, the last mile, by the United States Postal Service.

I thank my friend from Massachusetts for responding to Senator MCCAIN's statement. It described where we are simplistically on this. I know there are some people who believe the bipartisan bill that came out of our committee—Senator COLLINS, Senator CARPER, Senator BROWN, and I—does too much. It is too tough on the Post Office. So they are concerned about it.

Senator MCCAIN is on the other side. He doesn't think—and I am sure there are others—that we have gone far enough quickly enough. I think we found the right spot. I think this is a balanced, middle-way proposal. But make no mistake about it, the substitute bill that has been filed is not a status quo bill. It authorizes and facilitates exactly the kind of significant change in the U.S. Postal Service that the reality of its declining business demands we propose. So in most of the cases, with the exception of the 6- to 5-day delivery, which I will come back to, to change the 6- to 5-day delivery requires legislative authorization. I hope somebody puts an amendment in that would authorize the Post Office to go immediately from 6- to 5-day delivery because I wish to see what the sentiment is in the Senate. My guess is—

for the reasons that the Senator from Massachusetts stated very eloquently—people are not ready for that precipitous change from 6 to 5 days; that if we do some of the things Senator McCain is proposing, it would make such rapid and dramatic changes in the Postal Service that it will have the contrary effect to what people intend and it will diminish its services so rapidly that it will accelerate its downfall by decreasing its revenues.

This perhaps is not the right parallel, but I remember years ago when I was in the State Senate in Connecticut we had a real problem with the publicly supported bus transportation running a deficit, and one of the inevitable proposals was to raise the cost of the bus fare. Well, of course, one of the logical and sensible reactions to that—which happened—is that fewer people rode the bus because it cost more and it got into more trouble, and that is exactly the kind of downward cycle that the sensible change we are facilitating in this bill will make possible. Post offices and mail processing facilities will be closed under this bill. A lot of employees will leave the Post Office. This will all be done according to standards and in a methodical way that I think ultimately will not only save a lot of money for the Post Office—and I expect we will have an official estimate in the next day or two on that savings derived from our bill from the U.S. Post Office—but it will do so in a way that doesn't break people away from the Postal Service and put it into a more rapid spiral downward.

As a matter of process, I want to say in response to my friend from Arizona, Senator McCain—first, I want to say that I appreciate what he said about the amendment from the Senator from Kentucky, it is not relevant to this bill. I am sure there will be another occasion that his proposal to terminate financial assistance to Egypt will be relevant and should be brought up, but it should not be brought up on this bill because it is not relevant and it is exactly those kinds of irrelevant amendments that often get the Senate into a gridlock situation which means we won't get our job done, and makes the public even more dissatisfied with us. So I thank Senator McCain for speaking to that.

Senator McCain has introduced an amendment, which I oppose, but it is relevant and it ought to be debated. I know the majority leader is very open to working out a process by which amendments from both caucuses will be introduced and introduced in a timely way. There are several colleagues on the Democratic side who have amendments they want to offer as well. So I hope Senator COLLINS, Senator REID, Senator MCCONNELL, and I can work together to begin to reach a bipartisan agreement where we can take up amendments that are relevant—Senator McCain's is one of them—and we can debate them and get something done here. Too often the public is so

frustrated and angry with us because we leave problems unsolved because we get stuck in partisan, ideological, or procedural gridlock. This is a real problem.

The Post Office lost more than \$13 billion in the last 2 years. It would have been \$5 billion more if we had not waived a payment responsibility the Post Office had to the retirees' health benefit plan. It cannot go on this way. And if we don't act, it is not as if nothing will happen; something will happen. The Post Office will continue to spiral downward and the Postmaster will inevitably have to impose dramatic cuts in services and personnel. So I think it is our responsibility to create a set of rules and procedures here that acknowledges the need for change in the Postal Service, create a process—well, actually authorizes the Post Office to do some things it has not been able to do until now to raise more money—and create a process for changing the business model of the U.S. Postal Service so it can survive in a very different age, the age of e-mail, and also flourish because so many people in our country depend on it for doing so.

Madam President, 563 million pieces of mail get delivered by the U.S. Postal Service every day, so this is not some kind of irrelevant and antiquated relic somewhere. This is a beating, functioning, critically important element of our life, our commerce, and our culture, and a lot of people depend on it, so we have a responsibility to change it and to keep it alive.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, at a later time I am going to speak in strong opposition to the substitute offered by the Senator from Arizona, but I must say that he has every right to offer that substitute. We should fully debate it, and then we should vote on it. I am puzzled by the procedural steps that have been taken this afternoon to curtail the debate and amendment process on this bill without our even trying to get an agreement on the number of amendments, perhaps limiting them to relevant amendments, which I think would have been a fair way to proceed. So as much as I am opposed to the substance of Senator McCain's substitute and believe it is ill-advised, I do believe we should have a full debate on it and a vote on it. That is what we are here for.

There are many different views on how we should save the Postal Service, but surely all of us ought to recognize that we simply cannot allow the Postal Service to fail. It is the linchpin of a trillion dollar mailing industry that employs 8.7 million Americans. It is absolutely vital. It also is an American institution with roots going to our Constitution, and we worked very hard in a bipartisan way on our Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to come up with a very

good bill that would put the Postal Service back on the right track.

It would allow it to compassionately downsize its workforce, which it needs to do. As painful as that is, we would do it in a compassionate way by giving authority for buyouts and retirement incentives similar to those used by the private sector. The Postmaster General has said he believes he could reduce the number of employees by 100,000 without layoffs but by giving these incentives, particularly since more than 33 percent of the Postal Service employees are already eligible for retirement.

Senator McCain has a different view on how we should go about that. He has a different view on Saturday delivery, on rural post offices, on overnight delivery of mail, all of which I think are important. Our bill does not prevent the closure of every single post office, nor does it dictate that a certain number remain open or closed, for that matter. What we did is we set standards. That is the way it should be. We have the Postal Regulatory Commission set standards for access to postal services, and those standards are supposed to include consideration of such factors as distance to the next post office, geography, public transportation, and weather factors. That is far better than a one-size-fits-all approach that the Senator from Arizona would have or the approach used by the Postmaster General to target 3,200 post offices without even looking at whether there are alternative and far less expensive ways to deliver the services. And there are.

For example, a rural post office could be colocated in a pharmacy or a grocery store. It could still exist but run different hours, perhaps be opened from 7 to 9 in the morning and 5 to 7 at night. I wager that a lot of my constituents would appreciate that. That would be on their way to work in the morning and on their way home at night. It could colocate with a State office or local office, move into a town hall, or have a Federal agency move in with the post office. It could offer services that are available generally at State and local offices. There are so many creative ways we can preserve postal services in rural areas and yet reduce costs, and I believe the Postal Service needs to be far more creative in its approach.

But I do not support the approach Senator McCain has laid out. One of his proposals would create a new bureaucracy—I thought we were against creating new bureaucracies around here—such as a new control board that would be over the board of governors and would have these dictatorial powers over the Postal Service. That is a proposal that I don't think makes sense.

Our approach is to have a commission that would examine the governance of the Postal Service, but perhaps what we should do, if there is something wrong with the structure of the board of governors—it was substantially revised in 2006—is then we should

revamp the board of governors, not create this new superbureaucracy on top of it.

I agree with the comments of the Senator from Massachusetts on Saturday delivery. The provision that Senator MCCAIN has to move directly to 5-day delivery and his negative comments on the fact that we would prohibit that from happening for 2 years misunderstands the intent of our bill. It is not to say that might never happen; it is to say that reducing service should be the last resort, not the first option. The Postal Service has an advantage that it delivers 6 days a week.

Now if, in fact, after all the costs and waste and excess have been wrung out of the system and the Postal Service is still not solvent after 2 years, then we may have to move to 5-day delivery. But to give up that advantage immediately, I can tell you what is going to happen: The volume of mail will decline further. And if the volume of mail declines further after having a 26-percent decline over the past 5 years, what is going to happen? Revenues will plummet once again. So we need to be very careful about cutting service because it leads to mailers leaving the system. And once the big mailers, in particular, leave the Postal Service, they are not coming back, and the Postal Service will sink further and further into a death spiral.

My approach is to try to keep and grow the customers for the Postal Service. I think moving to Saturday delivery would drive more mail away and would hurt service and thus decrease the volume. So I do not think that is a good approach. But the reason for our 2-year delay is not an endless study, as has been described by the Senator from Arizona. It is to allow time for the retirement incentives to go into effect, the downsizing of the workforce to go into effect, the workers comp reforms to go into effect, the new arbitration provisions to go into effect, the administrative efficiencies that we mandate to go into effect—countless provisions of the bill to go into effect. I believe if they are aggressively and well implemented by the Postal Service leaders—if they are—there will be no need to eliminate Saturday delivery. That is the reason for the provision in our bill. But we recognize that maybe that will not happen. Maybe the provisions will not be aggressively and well implemented, and the Postal Service will find that it needs to take that extra step. But, surely, our first approach ought to be to implement cuts without hurting service.

Let me give an example of that from my own State. In Hampden, ME, it is one of the two postal processing centers for the entire State of Maine. The other one is in Scarborough, ME, in southern Maine. The Hampden facility is absolutely essential for processing mail from the broad reaches of northern Maine, eastern Maine, and parts of western Maine.

Under the Postal Service's proposal, the Hampden facility would be closed. That virtually eliminates the possibility of overnight delivery for roughly two-thirds of the State of Maine by geography. It means a letter mailed from my hometown of Caribou, in northern Maine, to Presque Isle, just 10 or 11 miles away, would have to make a 600-mile roundtrip to Scarborough, ME, in order to be processed and delivered. I can't imagine how many days that is going to take, particularly in the winter, and this is all ground transportation.

So that is the kind of ill-conceived decision our bill is intended to prevent because it is the kind of decision that is going to cause postal customers to take their business elsewhere. In proof of that, I received an e-mail from a small business owner in Bangor, ME, which is the town right next to Hampden, who told me he had already received a notice from his payroll company saying if the Hampden facility closes, then they recommend that he move to electronic payroll or they will hand deliver the checks from their payroll. So that, again, is lost business for the Postal Service.

Could things be done at the Hampden facility to save money? Absolutely. If the facility's size is too big compared to the volume of mail it is now processing, reduce the footprint. Rent out part of the facility. A major mailer would love to be right in the same building as the postal processing center. It could easily be reconfigured to accomplish that. So the Postal Service can do a lot to reduce its costs without doing away with overnight delivery, with Saturday delivery, and with the treatment of first-class mail in the way that we have been accustomed.

Coming from New Hampshire, I know the Presiding Officer has a special appreciation for this: The steps that will be taken if we do not act will leave rural America behind. Not every part of my State has access to broadband. We talk all the time about how people can go on the Internet. Well, they can't in parts of my State. We are making progress in that area, but there are many rural areas in Maine that do not have access to broadband. So they do not have alternatives.

Weekly and daily newspapers would be at a terrible disadvantage if overnight delivery is no longer available for two-thirds of the State of Maine. Think about that. Think what it means for bill paying for those small businesses sending out bills to their customers.

Think about what it means to elderly individuals who are receiving prescription drugs through the mail—very common in my State, which is one of the States with the oldest population in the Nation. A lot of our elderly in Maine are, particularly in the winter months, essentially homebound and they rely on getting those pharmaceuticals through the mail. So if we do away with Saturday delivery, close the

processing plants, no more overnight delivery, Monday holidays as well—I have talked to the Postmaster General, and he has conceded to me that even a first-class package or letter mailed on a Thursday would not arrive until a Tuesday. That is a long time when a person is waiting for vital medication.

So our approach, our fundamental premise, is to recognize that the Postal Service must become leaner, more streamlined, more efficient. It must downsize to respond to declining volume, but it must be smart in how it does so. It must do so in a way that does not alienate more of its customers because if it loses more of its customers, volume will decline and revenues will decline. It is that simple, and that is why this bill has been so carefully crafted.

This is not the bill I alone would have proposed, and I think that is true of all four of the sponsors of this bill. But we did what we are supposed to do in the Senate. We worked together. We had countless meetings, at times—I think the Senator from Connecticut will agree—endless meetings, to hammer out these provisions, to strike compromises.

We consulted widely with our colleagues—with GAO, with the Postal Service, with large mailers and small mailers, with the greeting card industry, with the newspaper industry, with magazine publishers, with anyone who had a stake—with the postal unions—and we got their suggestions and we crafted the bill to the best of our ability. We worked hard on it. I think it is a good bill.

I am very disappointed and indeed puzzled why we can't now proceed with debate on amendments on this bill and why we have a cloture motion on this bill already filed. That makes no sense to me. We are acting in good faith. We are open for business right now. We could be taking up amendments right now. I hope the leader will reconsider and allow us to do this bill in the usual way. I would pledge to him—and he knows I am sincere in this—to work with him to try to come up with amendments and see if we can go back and forth, side to side, and start working through them. We are here. We are open for business. We are ready to go.

This bill matters. Our economy is still very fragile. If the Postal Service stops delivering mail this fall, it will be a crushing blow to this economy. If it stops delivering mail in certain areas or the mail is very slow, it will also hurt this economy.

We cannot leave rural America behind. The mandate of the Postal Service is universal service. That means whether a person lives in the far reaches of Alaska or at the bottom of the Grand Canyon in Arizona or on an island off the coast of Maine; all are supposed to be able to have access to the Postal Service. It is one of the things that unites us as a country.

So I urge my colleagues to come together in good faith and work through

what I believe is a very important bill with a vital mission; that is, to save the U.S. Postal Service.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, I wish to thank my dear friend and colleague from Maine, not my ranking member but really sort of cochair partner of our committee, for her excellent statement. I share her frustration about the procedural moment we are at in the Senate. I hope and I believe this is temporary. I believe Senator REID's intention is to do exactly what Senator COLLINS has said she would like to see happen, which is that we negotiate an agreement, hopefully—it would have to be adopted by consent, but it would have to be amendment by amendment, where we would go back and forth and consider amendments from each side of the aisle.

I know Senator REID has filled the tree. It is not as if there are not amendments that the Senate Democratic caucus wants to offer to the bill. There are. There are several of them. I know there are several on the Republican side. We worked very hard on this bill, as Senator COLLINS has said. The meetings did seem endless. I would say sometimes they seemed excessively endless. But, nonetheless, we reached across the aisle and compromised.

This is not a perfect piece of work. It is an important subject, so it deserves to be considered, debated, and amendments need to be offered. I am confident in saying that is exactly the direction in which the majority leader wants to go, and the sooner the better.

Having said that, and seeing no one else on the Senate floor, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, we are debating this bill today because the Postal Service is facing, as many of us know, a dire financial crisis that literally threatens its very survival. This is a crisis that has been building for some time. It is one that only Congress can fix at this point, and one that we absolutely must fix now, literally in a matter of weeks.

Since the Postal Service was first established in 1971 in its current form, we have taken it for granted that our mail would arrive and that important business and personal correspondence would reach its destination. In addition, businesses, large and small, have come to rely on the mail to reach new customers and to communicate effectively with existing customers.

The Postal Service has a presence in virtually every community of any size in our country, large and small. It sup-

ports a trillion-dollar mailing industry that creates and sustains millions of private sector jobs—I am told as many as 8 million private sector jobs today. Unfortunately, a number of those jobs are at great risk today. They are at risk because those of us in Congress have, to date, proven unwilling or unable to come to consensus around a package of reforms that can update the Postal Service's network and business model to reflect the reality it faces today—if you will, to right-size the enterprise, much as the auto industry has right-sized its enterprise in the last 3 or 4 years. That lack of action on our part comes despite ample warnings about the severity of the problem and about the consequences of not appropriately and effectively solving that problem.

Nearly 2 years ago, former Postmaster General Potter announced—I think with the help of three major consulting companies—that the Postal Service would run up cumulative losses of more than 230 billion extra dollars by 2020 if we did nothing.

There are several reasons for these losses, including the diversion of first class mail to electronic forms of communication and legislative hurdles Congress has imposed on reform efforts.

Mr. Potter and his successor Pat Donahoe have done a tremendous job, I believe, in trying to chip away at these losses, with the help of their employees, with the help of several of their unions, with the help of a number of their customers, and I think from time to time with help from those of us who serve in the Congress and in the last administration and the current administration.

Over the past decade, the Postal Service has reduced the size of its postal workforce by roughly a third—not by firing people, not by laying people off, but through attrition. They have closed scores of mail processing facilities across America with no noticeable impact on service. People still drop letters and packages in the mail, and they might be delivered the next day or the next day or within at least 3 days—pretty amazing when you think about it. The approval rating for Congress is not very high, but the customer satisfaction of the American people with respect to the Postal Service is still at about 85 percent—pretty good compared to how we are doing here in our Nation's Capital.

The Postal Service has introduced some new products such as the flat rate boxes: If it fits, it ships. They have formed productive partnerships with companies such as UPS and FedEx. UPS and FedEx do not want to deliver every package, every parcel to every mailbox or address across America. The Postal Service does that 6 days a week. The Postal Service has a nice partnership with FedEx and UPS in order to make money for the Postal Service and to provide good customer service in that partnership. But despite

that, losses at the Postal Service continue to mount.

Last year, the Postal Service suffered an operating loss of more than \$5 billion. It will see a similar loss this year, even if it finds some way to avoid making the retiree health prefunding payments due in the coming months. Then the losses accelerate to \$6.5 billion in 2013; to \$10 billion in 2014; to more than \$12 billion in 2015; and to more than \$15 billion alone in 2016.

But these losses are only theoretical. I say that because the Postal Service is close to exhausting its \$15 billion line of credit with the Treasury and by this time next year will be well on its way to running completely out of cash. If that were to occur, the Postal Service's ability to continue operating will be in jeopardy.

Postmaster General Donahoe has said repeatedly that he and his team will do everything they can do to keep the mail moving even as the Postal Service's finances deteriorate. I believe him. But make no mistake: If the Postal Service is not permitted in the very near future to begin making the adjustments needed in response to the likely permanent declines in mail volume—especially first class mail—we have witnessed in recent years, the Postal Service will drown in red ink. The ripple effect of losing the Postal Service and the still very valuable services it provides would deliver a body blow to our economy at the very time our economy is recovering.

We are on the brink of this impending disaster in part because we are expecting the Postal Service of 2012 to try and be successful with a business model created in the 1970s. Let's remember, in 1970, when I was a naval flight officer on my first tour in Southeast Asia, there was no e-mail. There was the mail. The happiest day of the week was when the mail came—letters, cards, packages, magazines, newspapers, you name it. That was the day of the week to live for. The last time I was over in Afghanistan—and Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator COLLINS have been there any number of times—the last time I was there, they still get mail, our guys and gals still get mail, but do you know what they have? They have Skype, they have telephones, they have these little phones like we carry around. They have the Internet; they have Facebook; they have Twitter. They have all that stuff. As a result, they do not use the mail as we did in our generation.

Today, Americans live and work online. We shop and transact more and more business online. These trends are likely to accelerate. If any of our colleagues doubt that, then they should ask our pages—these pages who are sitting right down here—how often they sit down and write a letter or send a greeting card. Our colleagues should ask members of their own staff how often they pay their bills through the mail. We should look at our own mail. In fact, when I asked my staff to do

this, I said: Go back and look at 2001—my first year as a Senator—go back and see, if you look at the number of e-mails we got then and the number of letters we got then, what was the ratio? For roughly every 15 letters we got in 2001, we got 1 e-mail. I said: Go back and look at 2011. They did. As it turned out, for every 1 letter we received last year, we received about a dozen e-mails. Think of that.

The Federal Government itself is even contributing to this trend, and I think in a pretty big way. It was announced within the last week or so that the Social Security Administration, starting next year, will send virtually all of its 73 million payments—I think that is each month—to Social Security recipients processed online through direct deposit, not mailed out. That is us.

So even as the American people adjust to new communications technologies, many of us here in Congress expect the Postal Service to continue as if nothing has changed. But in these changing times, these challenging times, we need to recognize that difficult choices need to be made. It is not efficient or affordable to maintain a mail processing and delivery network built for the peak mail volumes of years ago.

That said, many of my colleagues have legitimate concerns about the severity and speed of the Postal Service's streamlining efforts. To address those concerns, the managers' amendment that Senators LIEBERMAN, COLLINS, BROWN, and I have put forward includes a number of safeguards crafted to ensure that the changes that will occur in the coming months and years are implemented in responsible ways—ways that are consistent with what I can describe as the Golden Rule: that we would treat others the way we would want to be treated. That includes customers of the Postal Service, employees of the Postal Service, and taxpayers of this country.

We also seek to provide assurances in our managers' amendment that those who still rely largely on the Postal Service, including rural customers without access to broadband, will continue to have access to the services they know and need in the years to come.

We also take steps in this bill with this managers' amendment to ensure that this effort to save the Postal Service is not all about closing facilities and cutting services. Recognizing that questionable policy decisions made over the years regarding the Postal Service's pension and health care obligations are part of the Postal Service's financial problems, we call for, in this managers' amendment, refunding the more than \$10 billion the Postal Service has overpaid into the Federal Employees Retirement System. A portion of that refund—that \$10 billion to \$12 billion, whatever it turns out to be—would be used to encourage at least some of the 125,000 postal employees at

or near retirement age today to retire now or within the next year or 2, saving the Postal Service billions of dollars annually.

Let me back up for a moment. If you go back a decade or so ago, there were roughly 900,000 men and women who worked for the Postal Service, for us in the Postal Service. Today, there are 550,000 people who are employees of the Postal Service. Out of that roughly 550,000 people, 125,000 are eligible to retire. They are eligible to retire, and they have not chosen to do so, despite the fact they are eligible.

One of the things the Postmaster General wants to do—and I believe our managers, those of us who are cosponsors, coauthors of this bill and the managers' amendment, want to do—is to encourage those folks to retire. Eighty percent of the Postal Service's costs are personnel costs. To the extent we can continue to right-size this enterprise, enable it to right-size itself, given the market share from 550,000, 500,000 down to maybe 450,000 in the next year or two—an enterprise where 80 percent of the cost is personnel—that helps get this enterprise back to a place where it is not bleeding money every day of every week of every month of this year.

Today the Postal Service will lose—get this—\$23 million. Today. And today, if you look at the amount of money the Postal Service owes to the Treasury on its line of credit, it is roughly \$13 billion—maybe more than that for the line of credit that only goes up to \$15 billion.

There is some controversy that flowed out of the 2006 legislation signed by former President Bush. He insisted at the time that in order to sign that legislation, we in the Congress would have to agree to I think maybe the most conservative approach to prefunding retiree health benefits of any government agency or any business with which I have ever been associated. I used to be treasurer of my State government, and we began prefunding health benefits for retirees several years ago—actually, right at the end of my second term as Governor—but nothing like this. We instituted that requirement in order to get President Bush to sign on to the bill at a time when the Postal Service was in good shape. That was a very popular year, if you will, for the Postal Service, before the roof fell in and the economy went to heck in a hand basket. But the Postal Service was in pretty good shape, very good shape, so the taxpayers would not be saddled with those obligations in the event the Postal Service could not meet them in the years to come.

President Bush's people said: Look, we will sign this bill. The Postal Service will not always be making money—as they were in 2006—and 10 or 15 years down the line when they are not doing so well, we want to make sure that a large part of the health care benefits for retirees have been satisfied or paid for.

That is not an entirely bad idea. We did not know that we were going to enter the worst recession since the Great Depression in 2008. We did not know we were going to lose 2.5 million jobs in the second half of 2008 and we did not know we were going to lose 2.5 million jobs in the first half of 2009, but we did. It put us in the tank and it put the Postal Service in the tank far quicker than anybody had a reasonable right to imagine.

But, in retrospect, the payment schedule put into place back then proved to be too aggressive once the bottom fell out of our economy in 2008. Our managers' amendment scraps the schedule adopted in 2006 and replaces it with a more realistic one that is based on what the Postal Service actually owes. And that change, coupled with some others, including one that would better coordinate postal retirees' Medicare and Federal employee health benefits, would cut the Postal Service retiree health costs by more than half—not ignore them but cut them in half and put them on a more realistic time schedule.

Finally, our managers' amendment pushes the Postal Service to redouble its efforts to innovate, to redouble its efforts to develop new products that can grow revenue going forward. There are some who would argue that—let me dwell on that for just a moment. Frankly, somewhere down the line—I don't if it will be a year from now or 5 years from now or 10 years from now—a light will go on in somebody's head, and they will say: You know, the Postal Service goes to every door in America five or six times a week. They are in every community in America. Why did we not think of a particular idea to enable them to create a new source of revenue or new sources of revenue?

I would like to mention some that are actually working. Flat rate boxes—if it fits, it ships. That is a great product. There is the partnership the Postal Service has with FedEx and UPS, delivered by the Postal Service the last mile or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 miles where FedEx or UPS does not want to go in many cases. That is a good way to make money, especially if more people buy things, order things for themselves, for their families, for their loved ones over the Internet and have them shipped. The Postal Service can have a big piece of that business.

There are other ideas as well. Fed-Ex and UPS get to deliver wine and beer. The Postal Service does not. We changed that in this legislation. There are ideas dealing with electronic mail boxes. We will hear more about those in the days to come. Other countries with postal services actually have used that as a way to provide a good service for their people and for their businesses, and I think there is maybe an argument that we should allow the Postal Service here to do that too.

Even further down the road and kind of out there in ideas, as the Presiding Officer knows in neighboring Pennsylvania—they do not have a coastline,

but they are close to ours and to New Jersey—5, 6 years from now, we are going to have windmill farms off the coast of the United States, the east coast from North Carolina, Virginia, all the way up to Maine. They are going to be harvesting the wind, turning that wind into electricity. Do you know what. The wind does not always blow, but there are times that it blows a lot more, and we are going to generate more electricity than we can actually use on a particular day at a particular hour. What are we going to do with that electricity? Well, we are going to store it. And where are we going to store it? One of the places to store it is in the batteries of fleets of vehicles. Who has one of the biggest fleets in America? The Postal Service. A lot of the vehicles in their fleet are like 25, even 30 years old. We have all of these new vehicles coming to the market that are far more energy efficient to replace those old and in some cases dilapidated fleet vehicles in the Postal Service. The new vehicles, with their batteries, can literally be a place to receive the electricity generated on a windy day in the Atlantic, out in the Outer Continental Shelf, to store that electricity and, when needed, put it back out on the grid, the electric grid, to provide energy as needed across the Northeast and mid-Atlantic part of our Nation. That is an idea that is sort of out there, but we need to be thinking boldly, and the Postal Service needs to be doing that.

I think one of the better pieces of our amendment—and this came from some of the more progressive members of the Democratic Party here in the Senate and kind of joined up with some of the more conservative folks on the Republican side—but the idea is that the Postal Service needs to be more entrepreneurial. They need to be more innovative.

When they come up with good ideas for making money, including the idea we talked about at lunch in the caucus we had today—how about vote by mail? In two States today—Oregon and Washington—they vote by mail. And what does that do to voter turnout? I think we were told by Senator CANTWELL that in her State last year—2 years ago in the election, they had 72-percent voter turnout. This year they are expecting 84 percent voter turnout. I mean, this is a country in which we are lucky to have 50 percent of the people who are eligible actually turn out to vote. And we can see what vote by mail can do in those two States. They could be laboratories of democracy for our Nation, encourage voter turnout, maybe do it in a more cost-effective way and—get this—provide new sources of revenue, a great source of revenue for the Postal Service. That is the sort of thing we need to kind in mind.

I don't think there is any one silver bullet, but I like to say there are a lot of silver BBs, and some of them are pretty big, and those might be among them. There are ideas we have not even thought of yet that we ought to do.

Let me just say—and I am getting fairly close to the end—that I don't mean to suggest that what the managers' amendment—the underlying bill was reported out of committee by about a 9-to-1 vote. The managers' amendment, crafted by Senators LIEBERMAN, COLLINS, BROWN, and myself, is not perfect. Very few things associated with my name have ever been perfect. But I will say this. One of my core values—some of you have heard me say this maybe too many times—if it is not perfect, make it better. If it is not perfect, make it better. And we have the opportunity to take what we believe is a managers' amendment which is an improvement over the original bill—we have the opportunity to make it better. I do not think in this case, they are not just Republican ideas, they are not just Democratic ideas, they are not liberal ideas, they are not conservative ideas, they are just better ideas. And my hope is that Members will have the opportunity in the days this week, in the days to come, to come to this floor and to offer their better ideas.

I would plead with our colleagues, don't just come to the floor and offer amendments that have absolutely nothing to do with the Postal Service. Please come to the floor to offer amendments that can help make this bill better with respect to ensuring that we have a Postal Service that is viable and solvent in the 21st century, that can meet our communications needs for individuals, for families, and for businesses.

We are not going through a fire drill here; this is an emergency. This is an emergency. It is a huge challenge, but it is also an opportunity to get it right this time and hopefully, with a growing economy, to maybe have a little bit of the wind to our backs.

We have to pass a bill. My hope is we can pass a bill with bipartisan support that is good underlying public policy so that when we end up in 2016, the Postal Service won't be running daily losses of \$22 million a day as they are today, that the Postal Service will have had an opportunity to use this refund they are owed by the Federal Employees Retirement System—\$12 billion—to pay down much of their debt, maybe use a little bit of that money to help incentivize some of the 125,000 Postal Service employees who are eligible to retire to go ahead and retire.

We can do this in a way—I know a bunch of our colleagues are concerned. We hear it—Senator LIEBERMAN and I, Senators COLLINS and BROWN—from our colleagues already. They are concerned about rural post offices. Believe it or not, we have some of those in Delaware. We have some of those in Connecticut and certainly in Maine, even some in Massachusetts. I think we have actually come up with a pretty good approach. And we appreciate very much the input of people such as JON TESTER from Montana and JERRY MORAN from Kansas, those Senators—one a Democrat, one a Republican—to

try to give us a better idea on how to move forward on the post offices.

Let me just close with this. There are 33,000 post offices in America, in communities across the country. A year or so ago, the Postal Service—the Postmaster General met with us and our committee, and he said: We have 3,700 of those post offices under review that we think maybe should be closed—3,700.

There were at the time about 500 mail-processing centers across the country that the post office had for processing mail, and he said: We would like to close about 300 of them. We would like to change the standards for delivery for mail from 1 to 3 days to maybe 2 to 3 days.

Some were afraid it was going to slip from 2 to 3, to 2 to 4, even worse.

Where we have ended in this managers' amendment—I would say to folks, my colleagues who are concerned about the impact that will have on their rural post offices or their mail-processing centers, here is where we have ended. The Postal Service has pretty much backed off and said: We are not that much interested in closing 3,700 post offices or 2,700 or 1,700 post offices.

What they really would like to do is this, and I think it is a smarter, actually more cost-effective approach, more humane approach, and that is to say to communities across America: We have a post office—or maybe the postmaster is making \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year and the post office is selling like \$15,000 or \$20,000 worth of stamps. Rather than close that post office, provide that community with a menu of options. The menu of options would be to maybe keep the post office open; say to the postmaster there who is eligible to retire: We would like to incentivize you to retire. Here is a \$25,000 bonus if you will go ahead and retire. You can retire, receive your pension, be eligible for benefits as a postal retiree, and come back and work on a part-time basis and run that post office for 2 hours a day, 4 hours a day, 6 hours a day, whatever the community feels meets their needs, morning or afternoon, midafternoon, evening. And that retired postmaster can—that money they collect, they keep. They do not have to reduce their pension. That is just extra money they can make for continuing to provide the service. We still have the post office there. The flag still flies in front of it. That is one option.

Another option might be, if the folks in the community want it, to put that post office in a supermarket. One of the supermarkets that are close to my house in Delaware—they have a supermarket, they have a pharmacy, and they have a bank. It turns out that one of our major national chains of pharmacies, Walgreens—I was up visiting their headquarters, their offices up in Chicago—I do not know if Chairman LIEBERMAN has been there, but the pharmacy of the future—they took me

to a couple of them—has a beautiful pharmacy. Part of it is a post office. So you can see in places across the country whether it might make sense to consolidate the post office in like a Walgreens or some other kind of pharmacy or convenience store. It might make sense to—say you have a small town and they have like a townhall, that kind of thing. How about consolidating those buildings together with the post office?

We have even heard of an idea like creating kind of an Internet cafe in places where they do not have broadband and see if we can't have in rural post offices—where folks who live in that community, in that area, do not have broadband access, maybe have it at the post office. There are all kinds of ideas out there.

You know, on the mail-processing side, instead of closing 500 mail-processing centers across the country, the Postmaster General has come to us. We worked to maintain—not to go from 1- to 3-day service—from that to a 2- to 3-day service or 2- to 4-day service, but to maintain kind of like a 1- to 3-day service—1 with an asterisk: The 1-day service would be overnight service, next-day service in communities like if they are in the same metropolitan area.

They were still getting next-day service. Outside of that metropolitan area, they might. But in most cases it would be 2-day service, and in no case would it be worse than 3-day service. By going to the modified service standard delivery, the Postal Service would have to close 500 mail processing centers. It probably would be able to close 150 and be able to offer incentives to employees to retire and they could migrate to other jobs within the Postal Service. But I think it maybe would be a smarter way to move this large, old, but still germane, relevant Postal Service into the 21st century.

I will close with this: This is not the time to kick the can down the road. I have no interest in doing that. I know Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator BROWN and Senator COLLINS have no interest in doing that. This is the time to fix the problem. I would like to think we are smart enough in the Senate to fix this; that we are smart enough to work with the House, with our staffs, a lot of good people—the folks at the Postal Service who work there, the unions, the customers, and a lot of people in businesses all over the country together working on this. I think we are smart enough to figure out how to solve this. We need to do that.

Last thought: During the recess I mentioned to my colleagues and the Presiding Officer and Senator LIEBERMAN during our caucus lunch, I said: I don't know what you guys did over the Easter recess, but I covered Delaware. I love to do it. I go back there every night, but it is a great joy to reconnect with everybody. I also spent some time on the phone and meeting with folks in businesses in Delaware and outside of

Delaware who usually rely on the Postal Service.

Nationwide there are 7 million to 8 million people whose jobs are integrated or part of or facilitated by our Postal Service—7 to 8 million jobs. We are coming out of the worst recession since before I was born—before we were born. We need to get out of it. One of the best ways to do that is to provide certainty and predictability for a lot of businesses. One way to do that is to pass postal reform legislation that finishes the job we started 5, 6 years ago. We can do that. We need to do that. I am encouraged that we will do that.

I thank the chairman of the committee, whom I love working with—I think we all do—for giving me a chance to work with him on this issue and for providing the great leadership he always does. Also, I say to SUSAN COLLINS who has just left the floor, it is a real privilege to work with her.

Finally, we are blessed with wonderful staffs, wonderful people, as Senator LIEBERMAN knows, John Kilvington and others who are part of my staff, and Michael and the team who are part of Senator LIEBERMAN's staff, and Kate who works with Senator COLLINS. They have done great, hard work. We are privileged to be able to work with them.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the Senator from Delaware, for his excellent statement on the bill and where we are in regard to the U.S. Postal Service. I thank him for what he has done over the last several years to try to save the U.S. Postal Service in a changing environment and to lead the change.

No one in the Senate—I believe no one in the Congress—has worked harder over the last decade to reform the U.S. Postal Service than Senator TOM CARPER. There is a way in which he has engaged in the kinds of problems that others try to get far away from. He sees an institution like the U.S. Postal Service and how important it is, he is challenged by it, and he goes at it with all of his considerable capabilities and persistence until he gets it right. I cannot thank him enough for doing that.

This is not the kind of issue on which one gains a lot of political advantage. Again, it is a test of our government, a test of our capacity to maintain public services that people depend upon in a changing world. We all know—and he has been a leader—that e-mail is affecting the volume of mail. The post office has to change to stay not only viable but strong. I think we are going to do it in this Congress, and nobody will deserve more credit for that than Senator TOM CARPER. I am glad I had the chance to spontaneously offer that much deserved gratitude and praise to Senator CARPER.

I say to my colleagues and staff who may be watching or listening—to pick up a theme of Senator CARPER and try

to bring it home—there are some amendments on both sides that ought to be aired out. I believe Senator REID wants to do that and wants to create a process where relevant amendments from both sides—not without limit but a good number of them—get to be debated on the Senate floor.

It is my understanding that both caucuses now are hotlining a request to Senate offices that if Senators have an amendment they want to introduce on this postal reform bill, to let their respective cloakrooms know so that we can see what the universe is and then we can see if we can work on an agreement where we alternate submitting amendments and begin to get into the substance of the bill and move it to a point where we can actually adopt something.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

WELCOMING JOHN CROWN

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I am joined on the floor today for his first time on the Senate floor with John Crown, who works on our veterans affairs issues. He came from the Veterans Committee and joined our staff in the last couple of weeks. John Crown is a marine, did two tours of duty in Iraq, and we honor him for his service. He, it seems, wants to dedicate his life to serving people who also served their country, people of all ages and both genders and all ideologies and who served their country anytime in the last several decades. I wanted to announce his first visit to the Senate floor today.

DOOLITTLE TOKYO RAIDERS

Mr. President, 70 years ago this week, on April 18, 1942, 80 brave American airmen volunteered for an extremely hazardous mission. The Presiding Officer, the senior Senator from Pennsylvania, knows I like to come to the Senate floor and talk about history and honor people who have played such an important role in our history. I want to talk about these men. They were known as the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders. They accepted their mission without knowing what it entailed. Their mission followed the attack on Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor happened, obviously, the December before. It was our Nation's first offensive against Japanese soil in the Second World War, planned and led by Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle.

The mission was risky from the outset. It was the first time the Army Air

Corps and Navy collaborated on a tactical mission, flying 16 B-25 Mitchell bombers from the deck of the USS *Hornet*, a feat never attempted before. The morning of the raid, the USS *Hornet* encountered Japanese ships 170 miles from the prearranged launch point. Fearing that the mission might be compromised, the Raiders proceeded to launch 170 miles earlier than anticipated. By departing 650 miles from their intended target, these men accepted the risk they might not have enough fuel to make it beyond the Japanese lines to occupied China. Accepting this choice meant the raiders would almost certainly have to crash land or bail out, either above Japanese-occupied China or even over the home islands in Japan. Any survivors, they knew, would certainly be subjected to imprisonment or torture or death.

After reaching their targets, 15 of the bombers continued to China while the 16th, dangerously low on fuel, headed to Russia. The total distance traveled by the Raiders averaged 2,250 nautical miles over 13 hours, making it the longest combat mission ever flown in a B-25 bomber during the war.

Of the 80 Raiders who were launched that day, 8 were captured. Of these eight prisoners, three were executed, one died of disease, and four of these prisoners returned home after the end of the war. Of the original 80 Raiders, 5 are still with us today and they are celebrating this week the 70th anniversary in Dayton, OH, honoring their fellow Raiders who are no longer with them. As they gather this week, I am proud to submit this resolution with my colleagues from both parties and from each State where these men reside. It is my pleasure to have Senator HUTCHISON from Texas, Senator MURRAY from Washington State, Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee, Senator TESTER from Montana, and Senator BAUCUS, also from Montana, and Senator NELSON as my cosponsors. It is my sincere privilege especially to have Senators INOUE and LAUTENBERG, both veterans of the war, as cosponsors, too.

As the Raiders gather this week, these five men will also honor other heroes—this is what is perhaps even as interesting as the first part—the Chinese citizens who cared for, protected, and enabled them to survive in a foreign land, a very foreign land to these American men. A Chinese delegation is coming to Dayton for the reunion. Among the delegation is a man whose father helped carry injured Raiders to safety and even nursed one Raider to health. I would be certain they could not talk to each other in a common language. They had never seen anybody like the other one. Yet one, a Chinese, helped this American airman.

It is only fitting we recognize this week's anniversary and commend the 5 living members and the 75 deceased members of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders for their heroism on that day. It is fitting to remember the compassion shown to the Raiders by the Chinese villagers they encountered.

The Senate resolution is our humble attempt to show our gratitude. The valor, skill, and courage shown by the Raiders proved invaluable to the eventual defeat of Japan during the Second World War. Today, these men, with their Chinese friends, remind us that quiet decency and uncommon valor in the face of sure danger, however rare, are traits that know no limit.

THE AUTO INDUSTRY

Mr. President, the last 2 weeks most Members of the Senate were back in their States talking—I hope listening more than talking and learning more than perhaps talking—and learning about issues and problems they were seeing and hearing in their State. I was in Ohio, from Ashtabula to Parma to Zanesville, to meet with Ohioans to discuss ways to get our economy back on track.

Too many Ohioans are struggling as too many people in Pennsylvania are struggling. Many are still looking for work. Others have seen their wages cut or their hours reduced, but from Chillicothe to Toledo, from Portsmouth to Mansfield, there are signs of recovery as our manufacturers, especially auto suppliers, but much more than that, and some of the small businesses supplying these companies, are beginning to show real signs of growth.

Few places are more symbolic of this than a company called American Manufacturing, located in Toledo. Three years ago the auto industry, as we know, was on the verge of collapse, threatening to take down with it thousands of auto parts suppliers. American Manufacturing got down to four employees. They had had 125. They supplied container crates, metal container crates, for the auto industry. It had once been 125, down to 4 employees.

President Bush tried but was blocked, mostly by Republicans in the Senate, his own party members, to do a bridge loan and assistance for the auto industry. President Obama, with a strong Democratic majority, over the opposition of many Republicans—although some Republicans in my part of the country, the industrial areas around Ohio, including Ohio, were supportive—was able to rescue this industry. We knew that rescuing the auto industry was way more than about helping Chrysler and General Motors. We knew it mattered, not just for those large companies and their workers, it mattered for Johnson Controls, it mattered for Magnam, it mattered for small companies such as American Manufacturing in Toledo, companies that depended on the auto industry.

In fact, estimates are that 800,000 people in Ohio are in the auto industry one way or the other; directly or indirectly they work for auto companies. Forty-eight of these 800,000-plus jobs were depending on Congress moving forward in early 2009, doing the right thing. The decision was not popular. There were all kinds of naysayers. There is no question now that it was a success. A number of people—from

Governor Romney to lots of people around the country and lots of conservative politicians in Washington—said we can structure it. But let the companies go into bankruptcy and then let them put the financing together to come out of bankruptcy. The only problem was that nobody—from Bain Capital to First National Bank—was willing to loan money to these two behemoths, Chrysler and GM, because they were in such a terrible situation and had such terrible problems.

So what happened? The government loaned the money. Much of that money is paid back and things are better. But let's not forget that in January of 2009, when President Obama took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Our economy was in freefall, and this was the time the auto industry was going down. To stop the bleeding, one of the things we did was unlock the frozen credit market for small businesses and manufacturers through the Small Business Administration. Through these SBA loans, we saw a new local bank that had only been around for a handful of years in Toledo, OH, step up, invest capital in American Manufacturing, which is in Toledo, and this company is now about to hire its 100th person. This company is successful now because of the auto rescue, and it is successful because of the Small Business Administration coming out of the Recovery Act and having enough money to guarantee loans not with a Wall Street bank but a local community bank to get this company on its feet.

Even with all of this we are seeing that the auto rescue is working, and we know two terrific examples of how it is working in my State. The Chevy Cruze is assembled in Youngstown, OH. My 28-year-old daughter drives a Chevy Cruze. The Chevy Cruze probably would not exist today if it were not for the auto rescue, and here is what it means to Ohio: The engine is made in Defiance, OH; the bumper is made in Northwood, OH; the transmission is made in Toledo, OH; the sound system is made in Springboro, OH; the steel comes out of Middletown, which is in Butler County, OH; the aluminum comes out of Cleveland, OH; the stamping is done in Parma, OH; and the assembly is done in Lordstown, OH.

Look at the Jeep Wrangler. The Jeep Wrangler was assembled in Toledo prior to the auto rescue, but only 50 percent of the parts for the Jeep Wrangler were made in the United States. Today there are more people working at Wrangler, producing more cars—still assembled in Ohio—yet instead of 50 percent, 75 percent of the parts now come from companies in the United States made by workers in the United States.

What we are now seeing as the auto industry begins to grow and the auto rescue was so clearly the right thing to do—thank God the Senate and the House didn't listen to the naysayers. In spite of that, we are still seeing huge trade deficits with China in auto parts.

Ten years ago our trade deficit with China and auto parts was a \$1 billion. That meant we bought about \$1 billion in car parts from China more than we sold to China. That was 10 years ago. Today that number has grown to almost \$10 billion.

The first President George Bush said a \$1 billion trade deficit, meaning we bought \$1 billion more than we sold to another country, translated to about 13,000 jobs. Do the math. Today the bilateral trade deficit between the United States and China on auto parts alone is \$10 billion.

We are seeing it in other things. We see it in auto, we see it in solar, and we see that China uses unfair subsidies. They subsidize water, they subsidize energy, they subsidize land, they subsidize credit, and on top of that they have a currency advantage because they manipulate the currency.

Sitting idly by is not an option. My colleagues on both sides of the aisle understand that. That is why my China currency manipulation bill—the biggest bipartisan bill to pass the Senate in 2011 by more than 70 votes—costs the taxpayers nothing, but it levels the playing field so China cannot manipulate its currency and cheat in international trade. As I said, that legislation passed with 70 votes.

A recently released report shows that if this Congress—meaning the House of Representatives down the hall—would pass this and send it to the President's desk, and if the President signs it, that by addressing the China currency manipulation it could support the creation of 2.2 million American jobs without adding a dime to the deficit. In fact, it would be the opposite.

If we take 2 million people who are now unemployed and put them in manufacturing jobs making \$15, \$20, \$25 an hour, we would clearly see the deficit shrink. More people would be back on the payroll paying taxes and contributing to their communities.

It is time to take bold action. It is time to stand up on China currency. I appreciate the support of my colleagues in the Senate on the China currency bill. Time is running out in the House. I am hopeful the House of Representatives passes this bill too. It is time we put American workers and American manufacturing companies first.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO KENNETH HALL

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to mark and celebrate the career of a Louisiana native who is a very dear friend of mine

and someone who is admired by literally thousands if not millions of people in Texas and around the world. That gentleman is Dr. Kenneth Hall.

Next week Dr. Hall will retire after almost two decades of leadership at Buckner International, which is one of the world's outstanding nonprofit organizations formed many years ago in Texas. Dr. Hall served as only the fifth president in over 120 years. After his retirement as president in 2010, he has continued to serve as CEO of this fine organization.

Buckner, as it is known, is a global Christian ministry that does extraordinary work with vulnerable children and families throughout Texas and other places in the United States and recently expanded internationally. They helped run self-sufficiency programs, education, job readiness training, and afterschool programs for vulnerable children. Remarkably, I have seen their work both in downtown Dallas, TX, as well as out in remote villages in Ethiopia, and the quality and expertise is identical and it is heartwarming.

The causes of vulnerable children both here and overseas is something, of course, that is extremely close to my heart. I spent a good bit of time in the Senate working with my colleagues on issues that advance their welfare, and it has been my privilege and honor to know Dr. Hall over the past several years.

He was born in Louisiana, earned his BA from the University of Texas at Tyler. He earned a master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwest Baptist Theological Cemetery in Fort Worth.

Before his career started at Buckner, he served as pastor of four churches in Texas. He has been married for many years and has a beautiful family—his wife Linda and their two married children and their grandchildren.

I want to say a brief word about Buckner itself. It was founded over 135 years ago when a Baptist minister, R.C. Buckner, started an orphanage with an initial donation of \$27. As the story goes, he literally took off his hat, put a dollar in it, and passed it around to the ministers present, and with \$27 started the first orphanage west of the Mississippi to help the children who were coming on those orphan trains across our Nation. They took them off of those trains and gave them homes and families.

The organization has grown since then, but under Dr. Hall's leadership Buckner expanded to include more than \$200 million in capital improvements and an endowment of more than \$200 million. As I said, he worked to expand Buckner's reach overseas.

I had the pleasure of traveling with him to Ethiopia recently, and I witnessed firsthand the incredible work and his personal passion for helping families become more self-sufficient, maintaining children in their birth

family groups, and helping to literally transform communities with this special Buckner touch.

So it has been said before: To be who you are and become what you are capable of is the only goal worth living. It is my hope that Dr. Hall will continue to achieve his goal in this life. We will miss him, his selfless service, and his dedication. We honor him today in the Senate for over two decades of service to one of the Nation's best nonprofit faith-based organizations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am delighted to follow my colleague from Louisiana because I am rising this evening to talk about a bill she has put an enormous amount of effort into, and she has had a very significant role in the success of the bill that I am going to talk about. We have a bill in Congress that is perhaps the most significant jobs bill that will be able to pass in this session. It is described as producing 2.9 million jobs—nearly 3 million jobs.

Rhode Island is a relatively small State, but it means 9,000 jobs in the State of Rhode Island. We have about 60,000 people out of work right now in Rhode Island; 9,000 would take a significant number of those folks and enable them to get to work.

It is a serious jobs bill. It also went through a completely impeccable process in the Senate. It passed out of the Environment and Public Works Committee with the strong support of our chairman, BARBARA BOXER, and the equally strong support of her ranking member, Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma. They come from quite different political persuasions, but they were together on this bill and it passed unanimously out of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

It came to the floor. We had a completely open process on the floor. It spent 5 weeks on this floor being discussed, debated, and amended. It was quite thoroughly amended. There were more than 40 amendments that were either voted on or accepted while it was on the floor. So from a process point of view, it was exactly what everybody hopes for in a piece of legislation. It passed out of the Senate with 74 Senators voting for it; a 75th who would have voted for it but had to be away in his home State. So the final tally, in effect, would be 75 to 22—a landslide, bipartisan vote; a jobs bill that passed with an impeccable legislative process and produced a landslide bipartisan bill.

What is that bill? It is the highway bill. It is a bill we have been working on now in Congress since the days of the Federal highway system under President Eisenhower. It is not complicated, everybody understands it, and 3 million jobs depend on its passage.

Unfortunately, it is snarled up, for reasons that are hard to explain, over

in the House of Representatives. The Speaker has not called up this bipartisan, very well regarded Senate bill. It has support outside this institution from everybody from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the Laborers' International Union. It has environmental support. This is a bill that is not being held up in the House because there is an important interest that was overlooked or that is an adversary to it. It is being held up for, I don't know, I would say Washington insider reasons having to do with the politics of the House of Representatives. So when there are 3 million jobs at stake, that is a real shame.

It started to be noticed by, for instance, the ratings agencies. Standard & Poor's just published on April 2 a report entitled "Increasingly Unpredictable Federal Funding Could Stall U.S. Transportation Infrastructure Projects." When we stall U.S. transportation infrastructure projects, we kill jobs. That is what is happening.

Here is how they describe it: Currently, the surface transportation bill remains mired in uncertainty. Holdups in funding reauthorizations and/or significant cuts in infrastructure programs are delaying some projects and forcing others to be scaled back.

Delaying some projects means taking away jobs. Forcing others to be scaled back means taking away jobs.

Here is what happened, as they describe it: With the March 31 expiration of the highway trust fund looming, Congress passed on March 29—last minute—yet another extension to fund U.S. highway programs. This latest continuing resolution—the ninth—provides funding through June 30, 2012. As construction season begins in the northern half of the country, this continuing uncertainty in funding could force States to delay projects rather than risk funding changes or political gridlock come July.

That is exactly what is happening in Rhode Island and in many other States. I was home over our recess and met with our very capable director of transportation Michael Lewis, who has served under Republican and Independent administrations. He said: SHELDON, I have a list of all the projects we want to get done this summer, in the summer highway construction season. We can't build highways in the winter in Rhode Island and in much of the country so the work has to be done in the summer construction season. He said: Here is my list if we have to live with this extension. If we don't find out until maybe July 4 what kind of money we actually have to build these projects, he said, I can't take chances. I have to start dropping projects off my list. Every one of the projects that falls off his list represents jobs. Every project that falls off his list is an unemployed Rhode Islander. He estimated there would be 1,000 unemployed Rhode Islanders because of this extension to June 30. So when people say: Oh, we have extended

the highway program until June 30, don't buy it. That is not a neutral act. That is a harmful act. That costs 100,000 jobs just in Rhode Island. So if it is extended further, the problem gets even worse. We cannot tolerate these continued extensions. We have to get action on a long-term authorization.

To go back to the Standard & Poor's report, here is what they said: Once a long-term reauthorization is approved, we believe it will provide an impetus for transportation agencies to reconsider high-priority projects that had been shelved because of lack of funding.

Those high-priority projects that had been shelved because of lack of funding, when they get taken off the shelf and put into the street, that is jobs. That is why this is a 3-million jobs bill, nearly. But they say, if the authorization is extended by even more continuing resolutions, such high-priority projects will remain in limbo.

I intend to come to the floor as often as I can. I know there are other colleagues who want to come to the floor. We want to come every day. We want to set up a daily drumbeat of attention to the fact that a 3-million jobs bill is being held hostage in the House of Representatives by the Republican Speaker for political Washington insider reasons that have nothing to do with the merits. This is a bill that everybody is for. We will continue to urge the Speaker to take up the bipartisan, fully paid for, widely supported, very well legislated Senate MAP-21 highway bill. Three million jobs depend on it. I am here to urge the Speaker to please do his job.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Gladly.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Did the Senator have an opportunity today—because I had a group from Louisiana in my office on the same subject, and I appreciate the Senator's leadership. The group was the American Engineering Society that was in Washington today. I don't know if the Senator had an opportunity to meet with such a group, but have other groups come by the Senator's office to express, as this group did, their utter frustration with Congress's inability to get such a basic piece of legislation through? Did they tell the Senator the same thing they told me, which is: Senator, when engineers are not working in America, no one is working. We are the ones who are designing the projects to be built. If we are not designing them, they are not going to be built. If we don't get this Transportation bill passed for a longer period of time, we will not be going back to work.

Is that the Senator's understanding when he meets with groups in his office?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Yes, exactly. I have met with the Rhode Island road builders who are concerned about where the work is going to be and how much of it is going to get done. As I

said in my earlier remarks, I met with the State director of transportation. I have met with the mayor of our capital city, which has a very significant highway construction project that needs to get done in that city that would provide an enormous number of jobs in that city at a time when Rhode Island still has over 10 percent unemployment. So we need these jobs.

That project needs to be done. That infrastructure is crumbling. It is a land bridge that goes through the city above other roads. It is I-95. It is our main artery for the entire Northeast, and it is in such poor shape that they have had to put planks across, between the I-beams that hold up the roadway and the planks are there so that the pieces of roadway that are falling in don't land on the cars driving by on the roads underneath. Amtrak, the main rail artery for the Northeast, goes right under the same highway, the same deal. They have the planks up overhead to keep the roadway from falling on the trains below.

So this is an urgent matter. It certainly involves the road construction industry, but it is everybody who wants jobs and economic development that is around this infrastructure. It is the mayors who are concerned about it and, frankly, it is the people who drive over these highways and want to know—these roads are 50 years old. It is time to rebuild. Let's get on with it. This shouldn't be complicated.

Ms. LANDRIEU. As the Senator from Rhode Island said, he had 9,000 jobs at risk in Rhode Island. We have 26,700 jobs at risk in Louisiana. This is a very significant deal and challenge for all our States.

We don't have the trouble of the winter and the summer but, unfortunately, Louisiana does have one of the largest percentages of bridges that are deficient in the Nation. We also, because we have to build on such soft and unsettled lands, need to have repair money readily available so people can evacuate in times of hurricanes and natural disasters. We have been working—and the Senator may be familiar with the area because he has friends and relatives in our State—on the I-49 south and I-49 north but particularly I-49 south that connects New Orleans to Lafayette in a loop around south Louisiana, which is America's energy coast that is so important for not only saving those wetlands and that great industry of fisheries but also supporting oil and gas production. That highway is yet to be built in a nation that depends on the resources we send to the Senator's State and to other parts of the Nation.

So I feel the same as the Senator from Rhode Island. I can't, for the life of me, figure out why the House will not move with more quick action to pass a longer term bill. Maybe if they can get just anything out of the House, we could get to conference and start negotiating some things that might be better than a 3-month short-term authorization which I hear nothing but

complaints about from everyone. I hear complaints from the left, the environmental movement, to the right, the business community. They say: Senator, we can't live with these short-term authorizations. We need 2 years. We need 3 years. We need 5 years. We need something we can build on, count on, budget for, and depend on; otherwise, it is too expensive. It starts and stops projects. We have to lay off a crew and hire them the next day or we can't place our orders in an efficient fashion. The Senator from Rhode Island knows we just raise the cost of all the projects. So why would the House claim to want to be so fiscally conservative but act in such a way that is the opposite, that is making all these projects more expensive?

I think the Senator from Rhode Island is absolutely correct. I will join him on the floor, and I hope our colleagues will come to this floor every night and say it is time to pass this Transportation bill. It is time to help Colorado, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Rhode Island to get people back to work and to fix this crumbling infrastructure.

Nine is enough. The cat has nine lives. This cat has run out of opportunities. This is the ninth short-term authorization. We have to move to a more long-term, sustainable infrastructure plan for America. This is truly an embarrassment, I have to say to my friend.

I wish to thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his leadership, and I will join him in subsequent evenings on the floor to raise this issue and explain to the American public not the inside baseball or the inside politics but to explain what is the most important thing about this, which is we need the jobs and we need them now.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I very much appreciate the tenacity of the Senator from Louisiana on this subject. It is a characteristic of hers, but it is always a good thing to be her teammate and have that tenacity deployed on this side. I am delighted she is here. As Senator LANDRIEU said, she has bridges that are deficient. One in five Rhode Island bridges is deemed to be structurally deficient. One in five highways is in mediocre condition. This is work that needs to be done. The American Society of Engineers gives our infrastructure on average a D rating. That is the trouble we are in, and we can't sort this out.

I intend to urge as many of my colleagues as I can to come to the floor, and I hope we get the floor covered by some of our colleagues on a literally daily basis until we get this resolved. We need to point out the places where jobs are falling off around the country because this wasn't done, where people are getting laid off around the country because this isn't getting done. There is a direct link between construction jobs not getting put on the list, funds not getting put out for those jobs and folks not getting employed. In this

economy, we can't afford that, and we certainly can't afford it for internal insidery Washington, DC, reasons.

I thank the Presiding Officer and I yield the floor and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative 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 allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RECOGNIZING RENO'S TEMPLE SINAI

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to honor Temple Sinai in Reno, NV, which has stood for 50 years as a place of worship for the Jewish people of northern Nevada. It is comprised of approximately 120 households who come together to form a strong community where the Jewish faith is celebrated. Temple Sinai has been a consistent presence for Reform Judaism in northern Nevada, a place where Jewish teaching, tradition, and spiritual inquiry is nurtured.

The important 50th anniversary, "Shanah Shel Zahav" in Hebrew, or Golden Year, is testament to the resiliency of the Temple Sinai congregation. It traces its humble beginnings to a small group of Reform Jewish residents in Reno offering High Holy Day services, soon expanding to Sabbath Services and Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. Many of these sacred rituals were performed in the private homes of congregation members who realized the importance of building a sanctuary. It is through their sacrifice and determination that this holy place of worship was built.

Temple Sinai has had many homes since its founding 50 years ago. Initially located in the Virginia City Room of the Masonic Temple in downtown Reno, the Temple was forced to find a new location after a devastating fire. Temple Sinai congregants then came together to offer the skills and capital necessary to construct a permanent location. Ground broke in February 1970, and the Temple has continued to grow since then, adding classrooms, a social hall, and a library. As recently as 2008, Temple Sinai expanded the available space and updated the Temple for the 21st century.

I have personally experienced the welcoming warm hospitality of Temple Sinai. I was honored to share in a Shabbat dinner with members of the

Temple, as well as attend Evolution Weekend. In visiting the congregation over the years, I have always been impressed by the rich spiritual life and intellectual openness exhibited there.

I would like to congratulate Temple Sinai for its important role in bringing Reform Judaism to northern Nevada and on its important 50th anniversary. While I cannot be in Reno to share in their celebration, I would be remiss if I did not offer my words of support.

TRIBUTE TO JAN GILBERT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to honor Ms. Jan Gilbert, who has spent more than 30 years dedicated to the advocacy of income equality, human rights, and women's health. Ms. Gilbert will be retiring from her current position at the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, PLAN, in May and has been named by the White House as a Champion of Change. Today, I am proud to honor her service and leadership as an advocate for a just and fair Nevada.

Jan Gilbert's work in Nevada began in 1982, serving Nevada's communities through the League of Women Voters of Nevada as president of the Carson City chapter, empowering citizens to become active participants in their government. Jan's commitment to lifting communities prompted her to cofound PLAN, an important organization that offers a cohesive force for social, environmental, and economic justice in Nevada. Jan spearheaded critical reports on civil rights, both in 2009 and 2011; she authored the Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity: Facing Race; and coauthored the 2002 Wider Opportunities for Women's Self Sufficiency Standard for Nevada. She also served as the cofounder of Nevada's Empowered Women's Project, representing low-income women.

Ms. Gilbert has been instrumental in promoting social justice among Nevadans as the chair of the Child Abuse Prevention, Respite and Family Support Subcommittee of the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. Everyone who works with Jan is touched by her contagious spirit and smile. Throughout the years, her noble efforts have been recognized by a number of distinguished awards, including the Mike O'Callaghan Humanitarian of the Year Award, the Hannah Humanitarian Award, the Public Citizen of the Year Award, and the Women's Role Model Award.

I am pleased to stand today to recognize the indelible mark she has left on Nevada in making it a more just place for all. I congratulate Jan and her family on a well-earned retirement. PLAN is losing a giant, but I am sure her love for service and helping those in need will continue to benefit the Silver State in new ways.