

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. One more point I wish to make. We must remain vigilant in enforcement of our trade laws. Our progress in autos is at risk of being undercut if we allow China to continue to cheat on trade rules, flaunt its predatory auto trade practices in our faces.

Only 10 years ago, our trade deficit in auto parts with China was only about \$1 billion. That has grown 800 percent to about \$9 billion to \$10 billion. That means more than 1.6 million American jobs are at risk. Our trade deficit with China is continuing to cause difficulty for middle-class Americans. China has begun placing tariffs on American-made automobiles. These massive illegal subsidies are worsened by indirect predatory subsidies such as currency manipulation.

That is why I am encouraged by the President's announcement of a new trade enforcement panel. It is borne of the realization that the stakes are too high for our workers and our economy if we don't fight back. We need an all-hands-on-deck approach among the USTR, the State Department, and the Commerce Department to be involved, to be more aggressive, especially by initiating more trade cases.

I know from representing Ohio in the Senate since 2007 what trade enforcement laws do. Trade enforcement by the Commerce Department and the International Trade Commission against China's cheating created jobs in Lorain, OH, in the steel industry; created jobs in Findlay, OH, in the tire industry; created jobs in paper and other industries around the State and resulted in a new steel mill, V&M Star Steel, in Youngstown, OH, where about 1,000 building trades people are building that plant and 500 or 600 steelworkers will be working in that plant that manufactures Oil Country Tubular steel—jobs that would have been in China if the President of the United States and the Commerce Department and the International Trade Commission did not enforce trade laws.

That is why that matters. That is why the new trade enforcement panel that the President is setting up as part of his budget is so very important for the future of our national security and for the future of the middle class and our great country.

I yield the floor.

THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I rise to address legislation we hope will soon be pending on the floor of the Senate, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, better known as the highway bill. This bill is dedicated to rebuilding both our highway and transportation system. It is a critical downpayment on both America's economic recovery and our long-term economic success.

Infrastructure is a doubly effective investment. First, in the short term,

infrastructure projects create much needed jobs, particularly now when the construction industry is flat on its back. It is one of the hardest hit sectors in this downturn. So rebuilding and repairing our crumbling roads and bridges is one of the best actions we can take to create jobs.

Second, infrastructure investment supports jobs in the long term. Think of how many businesses in this country rely on America's infrastructure to move their goods to consumers—businesses in every State of our Nation, from our most rural communities to our largest cities; small businesses, the largest corporations, and everything in between.

Creating the infrastructure that gives these businesses the tools they need to grow is an essential ingredient for future job growth. Yet, over the past generation, our commitment to infrastructure funding at the Federal level has not reflected its role as a key to our competitiveness.

China is spending 10 percent of its gross domestic product on infrastructure. Europe is spending 5 percent of its GDP on infrastructure. The number here in America is 2 percent—barely enough to keep our roads and transit systems in repair. There are those here in Washington pushing to cut the investment even further.

This is not a recipe for success in the 21st century, nor should this be a partisan issue. When I go home to Oregon I hear from businesses, large to small, from liberal to conservative, telling me that this transportation bill is a good investment in our future. Likewise, more than 1,000 organizations ranging from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to labor groups to local governments have urged Congress to act without delay and pass this highway bill. It is time for Congress to recognize, as our constituents do, that if we want jobs, if we want growth, if we want competitiveness, this is one of the best investments we can make.

I am very pleased that the committee responsible for this, the Environment and Public Works Committee, was able to pass a strong bill, and it is going to be merged with work done by three other committees, in all cases with bipartisan votes, and they will bring this bill to the floor with significant support on both sides of the aisle. But our work is not going to be done until we pass this bill through this Chamber, until we pass this bill through the House, and until we put it on the President's desk.

This bill is a downpayment on the next phase of our economic growth. It puts construction workers back on the job, creating 1.8 million jobs over the next 2 years. That is a sizable number—1.8 million jobs. That will make a huge difference to construction workers who are still struggling with an unemployment rate of 18 percent—more than twice the national average.

Second, this bill gives States the flexibility to direct more of their own

funds, putting more power in the hands of local communities to decide what their most important transportation priorities are.

Finally, it is an investment in the 21st century system that will move us all forward.

Of course, there are always ways that a bill can be stronger, and I will work with my colleagues to bring a number of amendments to the floor. There are, for example, several loopholes in the "Buy American" provisions that we should fix. We already recognize in current law that if we are spending taxpayer dollars to buy materials for American infrastructure projects, it makes no sense to shift those dollars overseas when they could stay in our economy and support growth and jobs right here. All highway and transit projects have requirements to use American-made materials for public infrastructure and transit. But two specific loopholes have enabled States to buy Chinese steel instead of American steel and shift jobs out of the country. First, we should close the freight rail loophole in our "Buy American" laws. The industrial might of this Nation was built on American railroads, made from American steel. As we update and improve that freight rail system, it is only right that those bridges and tracks continue to be made in America.

This summer, construction of a rail bridge in Alaska to a military base was awarded to a Chinese company because the Federal Rail Administration, unlike the Federal Transit and Federal Highway Administrations, doesn't have any "Buy American" provision. An American company was ready to build this bridge but because of this loophole, the contract went to a Chinese company using Chinese steel, paid for with American tax dollars. That is a huge mistake. Let's shut that loophole.

Second, we should close the segmentation loophole. This loophole allows projects to be split into little pieces in order to bypass the requirement for American-made materials. The Bay Bridge in California was split into nine separate projects instead of one bridge project so that Federal funds and, therefore, "Buy American" provisions would only apply to two out of the nine projects. This allowed the bulk of the bridge to be built with Chinese steel and Chinese workers, with American tax dollars. That is a mistake. Even Republican Members of the House know that is a mistake. They have put forward an amendment to close this loophole. Let's close this loophole as well on the Senate side.

In addition to closing these two loopholes, we need to strengthen the bike and pedestrian provisions in this bill. Bike and pedestrian systems are essential components in an integrated transportation system, reducing congestion and reducing pollution in a highly cost-effective manner. With gas prices on the rise, many families are looking for increased opportunities to get around on their bikes and on foot. In many

communities around the Nation such as Portland and Eugene in my home State of Oregon, and many other cities in Oregon, biking and walking have become a way of life, with families commuting, running errands, and getting around town. When they are able to do that, they decrease the load on the highway system. They reduce the congestion. They reduce the pollution. It is a win-win at every level.

But Federal funding has not kept up with this shift. Just as traffic lights and highway lanes are necessary to make our roads safer and faster for drivers, pedestrians and bikers need basic infrastructure to make their trips safe and efficient. Yet there is no dedicated Federal funding stream for bike and pedestrian infrastructure. This is a growing demand in many communities and States. Despite the fact of decreasing congestion on the roads, it is one of the most cost-effective strategies we could possibly follow. Biking and walking infrastructure costs little, but it has a big bang for the buck. In Portland 2 percent of the city's transportation dollars were spent on biking and walking, but the percentage of commuters traveling by bike went up 140 percent. Imagine if all those bikers were in cars by themselves, as are so many of us who drive to work. Congestion in Portland would have increased instead of staying constant over a 10-year period as it has.

I am supporting an amendment that will retain the current level of funding at 2 percent for bike and pedestrian projects, and I encourage my colleagues to be smart with the Federal dollar and support this amendment.

This bill—the broader highway bill—is a critical investment in our short-term and long-term economic success. Over the next 2 years, it will provide an immediate boost to a struggling construction industry, creating jobs where they are needed most. And over the next generation, it will act as the downpayment we need on infrastructure for our businesses to grow and prosper in the 21st century.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue to build support around this bill; indeed, to get this bill to the floor for consideration. While there are some in this Chamber who want to fight social battles by putting unrelated amendments up, there are millions of Americans in need of jobs, there is an infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt, and there are citizens who want us to put aside the games and do the work here so they can do the work back at home.

I yield the floor.

ROMA BRIDGE BUILDING

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, at the end of January, something remarkable happened: Slovak Deputy Prime Minister Rudolf Chmel made a positive statement about Roma. Saying something nice about Europe's largest ethnic minority may not seem newsworthy, but it is and here is why.

The Deputy Prime Minister reacted to an escalation of anti-Roma rhetoric in the runup to Slovakia's March 10 parliamentary elections by calling on political parties not to play the "Roma card." But more than that, he welcomed a landmark decision of the European Court on Human Rights holding that the sterilization of a Slovak Romani woman without her consent had been cruel and inhuman. He welcomed the findings of a Slovak court that concluded Romani children had been placed in segregated schools in eastern Slovakia. And he commended the human rights organization that had helped litigate both these cases.

To say that statements like these are few and far between is an understatement. On the contrary, officials at the highest levels of government frequently perpetuate the worst bigotry against Roma.

For example, after four perpetrators were convicted and sentenced for a racially motivated firebombing that left a Romani toddler burned over 80 percent of her body, Czech President Vaclav Klaus wondered if their 20-plus-year sentences were too harsh. Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi suggested that Roma were "physiologically" disposed to crime. Last year, President Silvio Berlusconi warned the electorate of Milan to vote for his party lest their city become a "Gypsyopolis." And French President Nicolas Sarkozy has explicated targeted Roma—from EU countries—for expulsion from France. The common thread in most of this rhetoric is the portrayal of Roma as inherently criminal.

Nearly 20 years ago in the New York Times—Dec. 10, 1993—Vaclav Havel described the treatment of Roma as a litmus test for civil society. Today, Europe is still failing that test miserably. As Hungary's Minister for Social Inclusion Zoltan Balog has argued, Roma are worse off today than they were under communism. While a small fraction of Roma have benefited from new opportunities, many more have been the absolute losers in the transition from the command-to-a market economy, and vast numbers live in a kind of poverty that the United Nations Development Programme described as more typically found in sub-Saharan Africa than Europe. Endemic discrimination has propelled economic marginalization downward at an exponential pace, and the past 20 years have been marked by outbreaks of hate crimes and mob violence against Roma that are on the rise again.

In the current environment, those who play with anti-Roma rhetoric are playing with a combustible mix.

In the near term, there is the real prospect that fueling prejudice against Roma will spark interethnic violence. Before Bulgaria's local elections last October, the extremist Ataka party parlayed an incident involving a Romani mafia boss into anti-Romani rioting in some 14 towns and cities. In

the Czech Republic, the government has had to mount massive shows of law enforcement to keep anti-Roma mobs from degenerating into all-out pogroms; its worked so far, but at a huge cost.

Significantly, Roma are not always standing by while the likes of the Hungarian Guard mass on their doorsteps; they have sometimes gathered sticks, shovels, scythes, and anything else handy in an old-school defense.

Even without the prospect of violence, there is a longer term threat to many countries with larger Romani populations: if they fail to undertake meaningful integration of Roma, they will find their economies hollowed out from within. More than a decade ago, then-Hungarian Minister of Education Zoltan Pokorni said that one out of every three children starting school that year would be Romani. Some economic forecasts now suggest that by 2040, 40 percent of the labor force in Hungary will be Romani. A number of other countries face similar trajectories.

A desperately impoverished, uneducated, and marginalized population will not serve as the backbone of a modern and thriving economy. But several studies have shown that the cost of investing in the integration of Roma—housing, education, and job training and the like—will be more than offset by gains in GNP and tax revenue. In order to undertake those integration policies, somebody has to build popular support for them. And that is where Mr. Chmel comes in.

Until now, most popular discourse about Roma seems predicated on the ostrich-like belief that perhaps they can be made to go away. Few politicians have shown the courage and foresight to reframe public discourse in any way that acknowledges Europe's future will definitely include Roma. Mr. Chmel has taken an important step in that direction. I hope he will inspire others.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING STEVE APPLETON

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, my colleague Senator JIM RISCH joins me today in honoring the life of Steve Appleton. We are deeply saddened by Steve's passing, and we join his wife, Dalynn, their children, family, Micron employees and his many friends in honoring his remarkable life.

For more than three decades, our State was a fortunate beneficiary of Steve's determination and hard work. A year after his 1982 graduation from Boise State University, he joined Micron Technology, Inc., and quickly ascended from working on Micron's high-tech assembly line to leading the company as CEO, president and chairman. His talent and energy helped overcome significant challenges and shaped Micron into a multinational world leader