

and regular order approach to the Federal budgeting issues that are so important, and I think she will take that approach and expertise into the HHS position—not just around matters of the Affordable Care Act but around a whole portfolio of issues which are so critically important.

We have got to be about reforms and improvement. Sylvia Mathews Burwell is a person who walks in to work every day, wanting things to be better today than they were yesterday, and she has the experience to do this job. I am proud to stand and support her nomination.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, in my home State of Delaware today we have a problem. Just this week the critical I-495 bridge over the Christina River in Wilmington—which carries more than 90,000 drivers each and every day, north and south on this critical artery on the east coast of the United States—was closed indefinitely.

While engineers and workers were on an unrelated project in the area, they noticed that four of the key pillars holding up the bridge were alarmingly slanted, causing widespread concerns about the bridge's safety and prompt action to shut it down.

Now as the Delaware Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration do everything they can to get to the bottom of this problem and to work to make this bridge safe again, tens of thousands of commuters are forced onto already crowded streets and highways, creating even worse traffic for everyone in our area, hurting our economy, and taking people away from where they need to be.

It is, sadly, yet another example—one that hits particularly close to home for me—in a string of major infrastructure emergencies, some due to unforeseeable events, and some due to a long-term critical lack of investment that signifies why investment in our infrastructure is so important.

Every day when Americans drive to work or drop off their kids at school, they make a simple bargain, an unconscious bargain with their government: They assume the roads will be safe to drive on. They expect that if they drive safely, they will be able to get to where they need to go in a reasonable amount of time.

Unfortunately, it has been quite clear that while Americans keep doing

what they can to move our Nation and our economy forward, we here in Congress aren't holding up our end of the bargain. We aren't meeting our responsibilities to invest in critical areas that we all know need work. We have a lot of infrastructure needs, but we simply aren't keeping up with them today.

This is about the end of the school year for most families with kids in school around the country. Like many other parents, I was going over with my kids what they think their grades are at the end of the year. Well, the country also gets a grade. We get a grade from the American Society for Civil Engineers. These are the folks whose job it is to manage and supervise and survey the health and capabilities of our infrastructure—our bridges and roads and highways. This group, the American Society for Civil Engineers, gave our roadways a D.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that we are dramatically behind in investing in keeping our highways and bridges and tunnels up to speed. They say we need \$170 billion more in capital investments every year to improve road conditions and performance.

That group of civil engineers, the ASCE, has also determined a quarter of our bridges are functionally obsolete or structurally deficient. In little old Delaware, that comes to 175 bridges that fail to meet what we would all expect of our government—Federal and State and county and local governments—that we maintain bridges to the highest level of safety that we would expect.

We will always face unforeseen crises and challenges, but this is one we can see coming. There may be hurricanes such as the great Superstorm Sandy that wiped out a lot of infrastructure in my region or there may be other unforeseeable events that impact our transportation infrastructure. But this one we have been seeing coming for years.

This inconvenience in Delaware—the closing of the critical bridge on 495 that has put so many at inconvenience—was nowhere near the biggest transportation disaster we have had in recent years. Just last year in Washington State, the Skagit River Bridge, built in 1955, literally collapsed after a truck drove into its framework. Seventy-one thousand drivers were using that bridge on a daily basis.

I think many of us remember, way back in August of 2007, tragedy struck Minneapolis when its I-35 West Bridge, which extends over the Mississippi River, literally collapsed under the rush hour traffic weight. More than 100 cars were thrown into the water, 13 people lost their lives, and 145 were injured.

If we don't act soon—together—we are going to face many more such tragic incidents like these. We have to address this problem and get over our unwillingness together to invest in infrastructure that we all depend on and value.

The simple fact, as I have said, is current Federal investments are not keeping pace with our needs. We are, sadly, months away from exhausting the Federal highway trust fund—the trust fund that finances much of the highway, bridge, and tunnel work around the country on the Interstate Highway System—because the gas tax that funds it hasn't risen in 20 years, but the amount of gas being consumed and thus gas tax revenue generated has gone down. Yet we don't seem here to have the political will to implement a solution to this basic problem that folks have been saying is coming at us, hurtling like an oncoming truck for years.

We talk a lot about our children—about the kind of world we want to leave them, about our hopes for the future, and it is just one of the reasons I am so concerned about our Nation's long-term balance sheet. Many of us talk about our Nation's deficits and our potentially crippling Federal debt. It is irresponsible of us to continue to rack up debt on our national balance sheet and leave it to our children and grandchildren. But I highlight today that when we neglect our transportation infrastructure—our highways and tunnels and roads and ports and bridges—these are things we use every single day in transporting our families and ourselves or goods to and from work or to and from home, to school, to soccer, to vacation. These are critical pieces of the American infrastructure. We are also racking up a huge debt there too. These investments have to be made one way or the other. I know we value these systems because we depend on them every day.

So if we can't come together in the short term to fix the highway trust fund, I am left to wonder how we are going to come together on the much larger problem of meeting our broader infrastructure needs, of which that trust fund is one small but crucial part. We face short-term, medium-term, and long-term problems. As I said, we have to fix this highway trust fund before it runs out of funding this summer. It is what often funds 80 percent of State highway work. It is a critical part of construction projects already scheduled to go on this summer. We have kept it funded by transferring money from the general fund for the last few years, but that is not how it is supposed to work. So we have got to come to terms with a solution that is responsible and meets this challenge.

We have a range of options, but none of them are appealing: Increasing the gas tax, putting a surcharge on vehicles, charging for vehicle miles traveled. All of these are unappealing politically, but it is essential that we come up with something to solve this long-term problem.

I thank Chairman WYDEN of the Finance Committee, who is working hard with other members of that committee even today to find a path forward and a solution.

Second, in the medium term, we have to reauthorize—we have to approve—ongoing work for highways, roads, and bridges, and we need to have a reauthorization for surface transportation by this fall. The Chair and ranking member of the relevant committee—BARBARA BOXER of California and DAVE VITTER of Louisiana—have shown, as has my senior Senator TOM CARPER from Delaware, who also serves on this committee, that Federal infrastructure investment is a bipartisan value. They have been able to come out of that committee with bipartisan reauthorizations a number of times over the last couple of years, and that is encouraging to me.

We also, a few minutes ago, came out of the transportation subcommittee markup on appropriations, the committee that says: Here is how much we will spend. That came out with a very strong bipartisan vote earlier today and will come to the floor in the next few months. This progress is encouraging, but it doesn't mean anything if we don't have a way to pay the bill when the bill comes due. We need to figure out how to finance infrastructure for the long term in this country.

There are several bills with good ideas that have been put forward in this committee and in this Chamber. I have supported two bills. One is called the BRIDGE Act and the other is called the Partnership to Build America Act. These bills will provide the critical steps we need to bring private sector money in off the sidelines and facilitate a real partnership between government money and private sector money. These bills have been led by Senators WARNER, BLUNT, and BENNET, are genuinely bipartisan, and enjoy support from groups who often don't work well together—from industry to labor, from the AFL-CIO to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

There are several strong bipartisan bills that show the way forward, but we don't seem to be able to get them to the floor, get them approved, and get them moving forward.

Right now, the truth is that the debate on this floor comes nowhere close to matching the reality of the scope of the problems in front of us. As I mentioned earlier, we have an enormous infrastructure debt. By 2020—in just the next 6 years—it is estimated that our Nation will need \$3.6 trillion of new infrastructure investment so we can fix and maintain our roads, bridges, rail, transit, drinking water, ports, sewers, wastewater treatment, and beyond. This is an enormous debt which is unpaid and for which we currently have no path forward.

I know many of us who serve on the Budget Committee and pay attention to the balance sheet of our country are concerned about our structural national debt. I wanted to take a minute today—on a day when everyone in my hometown and home State is concerned about how we will tackle the problem

of the I-495 bridge—and remind all of my colleagues of the scale of this national infrastructure debt.

At the heart of this problem and at the heart of so many of the problems we have is our unwillingness to pay for what we want, to pay the bill that is long overdue for our long-overdue improvements to the infrastructure of this great country.

Fixing this problem is going to take a great deal of revenue. We can reform taxes, we can involve the private sector, we can reprioritize funding, and we can reform the way government works. We don't lack for innovative ideas, but at the end of the day what we currently lack is our will.

The people of the United States, through us, need to step up to the challenge of paying the bill. In my hometown, just in the last few hours and over the last few days, we have become more engaged in this debate than we have been in a long time because a bridge that is critical, a vital artery for our community, has stopped. It is closed indefinitely. We need to work together to find the resources to fix this bridge and get America moving together again. It is my hope and plea that my colleagues will step up to this challenge, which I know every community in our country faces.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

D-DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as all of us know, tomorrow, June 6, marks the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings, which we have come to know as D-day. D-day, of course, was the greatest military operation in history—one that brought together 150,000 troops, 5,000 ships, and 13,000 aircraft in a sweeping attack on Nazi-occupied France and marked the beginning of the end for Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. The Allied Powers, of course, united as one and changed the course of history. It was our troops and our allies who freed a continent from the clutches of tyranny and our troops who helped win a war.

As a country, it is important that we recall occasions such as the 70th anniversary of the Normandy invasion and D-day because the greatest danger is that we forget—we forget about the face of evil and what it means to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—but it also means we need to remind ourselves on a regular basis about the heroism and courage and sacrifice of the people who gave all they had, including their lives, in order to preserve for us what we now have and what we too often take for granted.

We often hear that freedom is not free, and, of course, we all agree with that, but it almost has become a cliché, and it should not be. When we think about our freedom, we ought to think about those men who stormed

the beaches at Normandy, many of whom lost their lives. We must always remember those who fought in places such as Iwo Jima and ran into a buzz saw of enemy fire, many of whom never came back. We need to remember those important events on a day such as this, and we need to tell the story not only to remind ourselves, but we also need to tell the story to our children and grandchildren because they will, before long, have a responsibility for preserving this great experiment we have had in America for over 230 years—a self-governing democracy that has been purchased by the blood and the treasure of those who have gone on before. The free world as we know it owes its existence to the courage, grit, and sacrifice of those who fought in places like Normandy, and, of course, they will not be forgotten.

For me personally, I can't help but think about Normandy—which my wife and I had an opportunity to visit a few years ago—without thinking of my father-in-law, who landed on Utah Beach on the second day of the Normandy invasion. He said that after the first day it was much easier to get on the beach, but the effort to clear out the German Army and the hedgerows was murderous work and very dangerous. Thankfully, he came home, like so many, as part of the “greatest generation” that helped to build America into the powerhouse we are today.

My father-in-law passed away recently at the age of 96 and lived a long and rewarding life. But I can't let the occasion pass without remembering him as one of those brave men who stormed the beaches at Normandy 70 years ago.

Of course, there is another chilling number when we think about World War II. Fifty million people lost their lives during World War II. It was the bloodiest conflict in the history of the world—50 million people.

During World War II, of course, we recall that brutal dictators and totalitarian ideologies threatened the very existence of the civilized world, and we are reminded of people like Adolf Hitler and what he did and what other countries did in response either by way of appeasement or by way of challenging his aggression. And then we know about the war, of course, following the Pearl Harbor attack in Hawaii. America had to fight wars on two fronts—one in Asia and the other in Europe.

When the United States crossed the Atlantic and joined its allies on the beach of Normandy, the rescue of Europe had begun. History tells us that the weather and conditions that day were harsh. In fact, one soldier described the battle as everything going wrong from the beginning. Without a doubt, they knew what awaited them there, and they were not deterred.

You might wonder, as I have from time to time, what it took for our men and women in uniform to charge a beach occupied by the German military