

fulfilling our job description. Sadly, the President has not seen fit to come forward to embrace the solution that is in front of him. Indeed, from press accounts we have learned that while he understands the nature of the problem, as does Secretary Johnson, and what would be necessary to fix it, the President simply does not want to disappoint some of the more radical activists who essentially say we ought to open the floodgates to people from anywhere around the world and let them come in at their will.

Well, I am discouraged to hear the remarks of the majority leader where he said he is not optimistic that we will be able to address this issue constructively and find a solution before we recess in August. I would think that would be a matter of some urgency because as we have seen since 2011, these numbers seem to double every year. In other words, they start out relatively low. They doubled from 2011 to 2012, from 2012 to 2013, and from 2013 to 2014. It is estimated there could be as many as 90,000 unaccompanied children detained at our southern border this year. So if it is 90,000 this year and we don't do anything about it, what will it be next year—180,000?

This is a bad situation that we have within our capacity to address if we can find a way somehow to do so, but it is going to take a President, it is going to take a majority leader, and it is going to take all of us who choose not to just take the easy way but to take the hard way, one that will lead to a solution to this humanitarian crisis. It won't happen just by throwing money at it without offering any real reforms that will actually fix what is broken in the 2008 law.

I close on this note, again, to plead with my colleagues: If you have a better idea, please come and tell us about it. We may want to embrace it. Is this perfect? No. Does this solve all that is broken in our immigration laws? No, it does not. This is a narrowly targeted solution to a national crisis and one that will, hopefully, positively impact thousands of children.

For those who want to see more, I would say this is a moment to do what we can, when we can and to show we are serious about the job of governing and coming up with responsible solutions.

If we can demonstrate to the American people we can actually do that on a bipartisan basis and fix this, relatively speaking, smaller but nevertheless urgent problem, maybe we can earn their trust enough to tackle some bigger problems in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as the Senate begins debate on transportation funding this week, it is clear to me that all sides—Democrats and Repub-

licans—agree that what is needed most is a long-term plan for rebuilding our country's infrastructure.

The reality is we simply cannot have big league economic growth with little league infrastructure. Unfortunately, all over our country, we have potholes and sinkholes, and one of the reasons we are not seeing them filled is because there is no long-term plan or a plan that provides certainty and predictability for all sides—local government and businesses and developers and others—to know the funding will be there.

As we start the discussion that is going to go through the week about a bipartisan plan to go forward on transportation funding—as Senator HATCH and I and the Finance Committee have brought before the Senate today—I want all sides to know it is our view that to get to the long-term road, you have to have a short-term path, and that short-term path is what Senator HATCH and I have pulled together on a bipartisan basis which we hope our colleagues will support before the week is out.

I think all of the Senators understand what is at stake here. Allowing the highway trust fund to run dry would slam the brakes on critical infrastructure projects across the land. Let's be clear: It is nonnegotiable that Congress will prevent that from happening. No Senator wants State and local governments to have to pick and choose which projects move forward and which ones are to be set apart because Congress didn't do its job before the August break.

The reality is a transportation shutdown would be horrendous news for tens of thousands of construction workers facing layoffs. The damages would ripple throughout our economy. Businesses would have a tougher time getting products to market and customers through their doors. Commuters would spend more time sitting in traffic and burning through gas. Car owners would have to fork over more cash to replace their tires and fix their broken suspensions.

With all Americans having something at stake, Congress must act, and that is why it is so important, in my view, to pass the bipartisan PATH Act—Preserving America's Transit and Highways Act—this week.

As I have indicated, the Finance Committee came together on a bipartisan basis to advance this legislation to the Senate floor. Senator HATCH and I met regularly on this matter throughout the spring to reach a solution. When I first proposed a draft of a chairman's mark and announced a committee markup, Senator HATCH and the Finance Committee's Republicans asked for more time to reach a bipartisan consensus, and I agreed. We continued to talk almost each day, with our staffs in constant contact. Every member of the committee pitched in. When the committee reconvened to consider the modified legislation, it passed with virtual unanimity. This is a truly bipartisan plan.

Our colleagues in the other body have offered their own legislation. I wish to take a brief moment to highlight some of the differences between the two bills that, in my view, are quite important. As part of our effort to reach a bipartisan agreement, the Finance Committee agreed to adopt several of the funding sources proposed by the Ways and Means Committee. Those sources included customs user fees and pension smoothing. The Finance Committee's bill leaves room for customs user fees to continue to support vital trade programs. In the committee's view, that is an important tradition to protect.

The Finance Committee's legislation also leaves room for revenue from the pension smoothing provision to help secure multi-employer pension plans that face insolvency.

Finally, the Finance Committee's legislation draws some revenue by improving the enforcement of tax laws that are now on the books. I bring this up because I have seen some inaccurate accusations about what these enforcement provisions would do. Let's be clear: These are not new taxes. They are not tax increases. In fact, the Finance Committee even received a letter from Grover Norquist and the group Americans for Tax Reform saying so. Mr. Norquist is not soft on the question of tax increases, and he has indicated that these provisions are not tax hikes. What these provisions do is crack down on tax cheats and ensure that mortgage lenders provide homeowners with more tax information than they are usually getting today.

By contrast, it is my view that the other body not only missed an opportunity to strengthen tax compliance, but also weakened the solvency of pension plans and leaves no funds in reserve to address that problem down the road. The House approach for paying for transportation funding creates another funding problem for pension plans that Congress will have to solve in the future. In effect, as one colleague indicated to me, we have one challenge on our hands in terms of transportation, and if we now take the House approach, we will have two challenges on our hands: transportation and pension.

The Finance Committee, on a bipartisan basis, decided through the PATH Act to come to the Senate floor as the transportation shutdown approaches with tens of thousands of jobs on the line and advance a bipartisan proposal.

What is needed next after this legislation has passed and is safely in the rearview mirror is what I touched on at the outset: a long-term plan that would rebuild America's infrastructure and end the cycle of stopgap funding. That will require more than the bare minimum of fixing the highway trust fund. Even in the best of times when there is no threat of a transportation shutdown—we are making a little league infrastructure investment of less than 2 percent of our gross domestic product.

Our big league competitors are going a different route. In parts of Canada they put 10 percent of GDP into infrastructure projects, and China invests almost as much.

With such a small investment, it is getting harder for our country to maintain the transportation system it has, much less take up new projects that would help America compete with the world's other heavyweight economies.

For example, in our State the poor condition of many roads costs the average driver almost \$175 per year. There are more than 1,300 bridges functionally obsolete, and more than 400 bridges are structurally deficient. The bill for repairs will only grow and grow as Congress waits to get serious about infrastructure.

We ought to look at managing the transportation system like owning a car. Responsible car owners don't let them fall into disrepair. They change the oil, rotate the tires, and fix the transmission when it is needed. It is all part of responsible ownership. Some day, if you want to resell the car or give it to your child, the car will be in good shape. It is time for this generation to be responsible owners of America's transportation system.

The challenge in the weeks and months ahead will be to find policies that can sustain the highway trust fund for good while finding new ways to draw investment dollars into American infrastructure. Priority one, in my view, ought to be to bring private capital off the sidelines and into the game on transportation. With interest rates as low as they are today, now is the time to act.

In that regard, I wish to commend my colleague from North Dakota, Senator HOEVEN, who has joined me in just such an effort. We call them TRIP bonds, transportation and regional infrastructure projects, to get more private capital into infrastructure. Senators WARNER, BLUNT, and BENNET have tried another approach.

As Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, I say to colleagues that all of the long-term approaches will be on the table when we get over this short-term challenge this week.

Our colleague from Kentucky, Senator PAUL, has a very important idea with respect to transportation, which is to look at repatriation. Senator SCHUMER, my seatmate on the Finance Committee, has another approach. The point is that all of these promising ideas—each of which has the opportunity for bipartisan support—deserves consideration, and as Chair of the Finance Committee, I commit this afternoon to do that.

When the Committee approved the PATH Act, there was unanimous agreement to work together on a long-term solution to our infrastructure challenge. I have talked with a number of Senators on both sides, and the message is clear: The Senate is ready to act. This will not become another extender issue with Congress kicking the

can down a crumbling road again and again.

I will close with this. We have an important job to do this week. I hope we will continue the Finance Committee's bipartisan work and pass the PATH Act so we can protect thousands of construction jobs and end the threat of a transportation shutdown.

Some people have said there is no time and no room for compromise with our colleagues in the House—that the House is saying, it's our way or no highway. I disagree. By working together, our colleagues in the House and the Senate can reach a bipartisan agreement very quickly, and then we will move on to the next challenge and solve our infrastructure crisis for the long term.

I yield the floor.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

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

The Senator from North Dakota.

UKRAINE

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I wish to start with my support of the comments of the Senator from Oregon. We need to get a highway bill done this week, and I look forward to working with him, particularly on a long-term plan with some of the concepts he has put forward. We need it for our infrastructure across this great Nation. Again, I look forward to working with the Senator in that endeavor and express my thanks.

I rise to speak on the issue of Ukraine and the need to address that situation and address it with a long-term strategy.

Last week Russian separatists shot down a Malaysian airliner with 298 souls on board. Innocent people were killed because Russia wants to control Ukraine—if not all of Ukraine, certainly Eastern Ukraine.

The Obama administration is struggling to respond. President Obama talks about the need for Vladimir Putin and Russia to be accountable. Meanwhile, Russia continues to deny what is going on. Putin continues to arm Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine, separatists led by Russian special forces, military operatives armed and directed by Moscow.

We need to respond. Our country needs to respond, and we need to respond with a long-term strategy and not just talk and not a short-term strategy, and that is something we can do. We can respond, and we need to respond with a long-term strategy.

We can lead with strong sanctions against Russia—sanctions that would truly affect the banking sector and other sectors of their economy in a meaningful way. We can help Europe follow us with these same sanctions. We can help them by providing energy to the European Union.

Europe is dependent on Russia for its energy. I brought some charts to depict

the situation. The first chart shows countries in Europe and how many of them get all or a very large share of their natural gas from Russia. So they are dependent on Russia for their energy, and that is an incredible source of strength for the Putin regime.

Here we see—I know it is somewhat difficult—all of these pipelines coming out of Russia through Ukraine and into the European Union, supplying all of that energy to these European countries. Because of that, we see all of these countries that are dependent on Russia. That is an incredible source of strength and power for Russia, and it is holding up Europe from engaging in the kinds of sanctions that could really stop Russia—stop the Russian economy and stop President Putin in his tracks.

We can break that trend and we can break that stranglehold by allowing more LNG—liquefied natural gas—exports from our country. We have the companies right now, today, that want to build LNG export facilities, but they are being held up from doing so.

I wish to go to my third chart. This isn't all of them, but right here there are 16 companies—13 on our coast, 3 in Canada—and 1 of these actually has received conditional approval. But here are 13 applications for companies that want to build LNG facilities to export natural gas, and they are being held up. All of these have been held up somewhere between 1 and 2 years. They can't even get permitted or approved by the Department of Energy to build those facilities.

What are we talking about? Let me give a specific example of one of them—a company my colleagues have probably heard of—ExxonMobil. They want to build a \$10 billion facility at Sabine Pass in Texas. I just pointed this one out on this chart right here, in this area on the gulf. They are ready to go right now. They have been in the application process for maybe 1 or 2 years, and they think they are maybe halfway through it. So they have another year or 2 years before they can build a \$10 billion facility that will move natural gas. They will bring it right into the UK, right into Europe. Why aren't we green-lighting this right now, today? Why do we continue to hold this up?

Some critics say it is going to take them some time to build it. Well, of course it is going to take some time to build, but the faster we get these projects permitted, the sooner they are going to get built. The reality is they will not only have an impact as they are able to move gas into the market, they will have an impact today because those European countries will know these other sources of supply are coming.

Also, Vladimir Putin knows we are serious about providing alternative energy to Europe, and I think that will make a big difference in terms of strengthening the European countries' readiness to join us with the kinds of sanctions we need to truly make a difference.