just says that they are still being negotiated. So how the heck do we know what we are even voting on? And here we have given away the store in this last vote so that we will not have an opportunity to make it better.

When my friend talked about how many jobs were lost in West Virginia after NAFTA, my heart sank. Those are a lot of jobs in a smaller State. My State is a large State. We lost about 80,000-plus jobs. That is a lot. We are a larger State, though.

Percentagewise, you had 2 million and at the time we had about 30 million. So in terms of percentages, your people suffered mightily. But we suffered mightily. More than 80,000 families lost their jobs.

I don't want to keep my colleagues on the floor, but I am only going to speak for 60 seconds more because my colleague from Delaware is such a pal and said I could go before him.

I have a very simple amendment I am fighting to get a vote on. Listen to what it is. It simply says you cannot get fast-track authority to negotiate with any country that doesn't pay at least a $2 minimum wage. I ask the people who are watching this debate here and at home: Do you know that out of the 12 countries we are negotiating with, 7 of them have less than a $2 minimum wage?

Let me be specific. Chile has a $1.91 minimum wage. Malaysia has a $1.21 minimum wage. Peru has a $1.15 minimum wage. Mexico has an 80-cent minimum wage.

Do you remember NAFTA? Let's do NAFTA. It is going to raise the standard of living in Mexico, and the Mexican people won't come across the border. We had all those factory jobs leave. And in this, Mexico is part of this deal.

How about Vietnam? 58 cents. And how about Brunei and Singapore? They have no minimum wage.

What kind of a chance do our workers have? I don't care how productive they are. We have the most productive workers. The people in these countries are very smart. They are terrific.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be added as a cosponsor on that amendment.

Mrs. BOXER. Absolutely.

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

Ms. WARREN. I ask unanimous consent to be added as a cosponsor on that amendment.

Mrs. BOXER. Absolutely, I am very proud to have Senator WARREN.

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

Mrs. BOXER. What kind of chance do our workers have? Do you think a manufacturer in their right mind is going to stay here when they can go to Vietnam and have some terrific people?

I know the Vietnamese community in my home State is fantastic. They are fantastic leaders. They are fantastic workers. It is sad that the ones who are left behind earn 58 cents an hour. What chance do our workers have?

Now, we have 12 million manufacturing jobs left in this Nation of ours—this greatest of Nations. What kind of chance do they have? Do you know that I cannot get this amendment up for a vote? I think I know the reason. They do not want to have to vote against it. I am still hopeful. I am holding out hope. I am fighting for it. But it seems to me when you are saying to the American people: Do you want your Senator to have to go downstairs to a secure room, give up your electronics to a clerk, be told that if you take notes you have to leave them behind so the clerk can read it, but your staff cannot read it, you cannot discuss it with the people who do not have top clearance for the trade agreement?

Then, you have to have the amendment that Senators WARREN and MANCHIN have offered, which simply says: Make the trade agreement public before we give exceptional fast-track authority to any President. I do not care who it is—Democrat or Republican—this is not a partisan issue.

I have voted for half of the trade agreements, so I have voted for many trade agreements but not with countries that pay slave wages. Let's be clear.

This is a tough day for the U.S. Senate. I know we have been split up every which way on this, but I think there are certain things we have learned from this debate: Secrecy is no good. I respect my President. I have talked to him. I know in his heart he is doing what he thinks is right, but when he says this is not secret and everyone has access to it, I say to my President and I say to my friend Senator HATCH: This is not an open process.

The secrecy is ludicrous. It is ridiculous. It is against the interests of the people we represent. I represent close to 40 million people. As Senator MANCHIN said, those people count on us, but if we do not know what is in an agreement, how can we be wise about what we want to say about it and what we want to do about it?

I want to thank my friends for coming down here this afternoon. I know this is hard on the Senate. We are going to probably be here a very long time. But the fact is that people depend on us, and I am proud to stand with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

## OUR COUNTRY'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to discuss the need to strengthen the transportation system of our country, our roads, our highways, our bridges—our transportation system. A long time ago, the question was asked: What is the role of government? If you ask 500 people, you probably will not get 100 different answers, but you will get a lot of different answers.

Abraham Lincoln was once asked: What is the role of government? This is what he said: The role of the government is to do for the people what they cannot do for themselves. Let me say that again. The role of government is to do for the people what they cannot do for themselves.

Sometimes I go to schools and young students ask me: What do you do? The kids in elementary schools, third, fourth, fifth graders say: What do you do?

I tell them I am a United States Senator.

They say: What do you do?

I tell them I help make the rules for our country. We call them laws. I do that with 99 other Senators, 435 Representatives, the President, and the Vice President.

They say: Well, what else do you do?

I tell them I help people. I help people. The best way to help somebody is to make sure they have a job—to make sure they have a job.

I had the privilege of being Governor of Delaware for 8 years. I am told that in those 8 years, more jobs were created in Delaware than any 8 years in Delaware history. I did not create one of them.

We have seen in the last 6-plus years in this country some 12 million jobs created. I did not create one of them. My colleagues did not create those jobs. The President and the Vice President did not create those jobs.

What we are responsible for doing here is to create a nurturing environment for job creation, access to capital—to money—for businesses that need to raise money, a world-class workforce, public safety, clean environment, public health, a Tax Code that is fair and reasonable, regulations that embody common sense and reflect common sense.

We actually have, believe it or not, on each of our desks on the floor, a book. It is called the ''Senate Manual.'' We do not look at it that often, but if you go to one of the sections about two-thirds of the way through the book, you will find the Constitution. The Constitution lays out who is responsible for what generally in our country, for different responsibilities that do fall on government.

There is a section in the Constitution—I am not going to read it, but Senator JIM INHOFE of Oklahoma has oftentimes referred to it—where it talks about the obligation and responsibility of the Federal Government to post roads—post roads. For years, that has been read and interpreted to mean to build some roads, some highways, and some bridges.

As time goes by, we have more and more people to build transit systems as well. As it turns out, as we go along in time—after being a country for almost 225 years or so, one of the most important things that we do in creating a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation is to make sure our country has transportation systems—roads, highways, bridges, transit

systems—that are worthy of this great Nation that we are.

As a former Governor—as I like to say, a recovering Governor—but as a former Governor, I have seen the impact roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems have on the economic growth and success in my State, the region in which we live, and across this country. It is how we move people. It is how we move goods. It is the key to an efficient and growing economy.

For more than a decade, however, we have faced funding shortfalls for the Federal highway trust fund. This stop-and-go funding and lack of uncertainty has undermined—has undermined—the potential for economic growth in America for years. That has to stop.

In fact, since 2008, we had to transfer nearly $65 billion out of the general fund—nearly $65 billion out of the general fund—which is far from running a surplus, to patch holes in the highway trust fund.

I like to use the example of the glasses. We have glasses here that the pages are nice enough to fill with water and to bring for us from time to time. I would like for this glass to be the Federal highway trust fund. It is empty. There is another glass here. This is the general fund of the United States. It is empty. We have another glass over here that is full. It is full. When the general fund is empty and the transportation fund, the highway fund are empty, what we do is we go to this glass over here and say: How about some water? How about some money?

We borrow money all over the world—all over the world. One of the places we borrow a lot of it is China. When the Chinese lend us money, they do not want to be bothered when we feel they may have been manipulating their currency.

They will say to us: We thought you wanted to borrow money, so leave us alone on currency manipulation. They may say: Leave us alone when it comes to taking unfair advantage in terms of trade. When the Chinese are pushing around the Vietnamese in the Philippines in the South China Sea—where I used to fly as a flight officer—they would say: You cannot do that.

And the Chinese might respond: Well, we thought you wanted to borrow our money.

We find ourselves in a very difficult position to be obligated to a lender that is doing things that we think are inappropriate or wrong.

Unfortunately, with the example like the one I have just given you, this actually does happen.

We have not had a transportation bill that lasts for more than 2 years for, I think, now 7 years. It used to be commonplace that every 6 years we would pass a fund, a transportation bill, for our country. We call it the highway bill, but it was for roads, highways, and for transit systems—every 6 years, almost like clockwork.

The money provided by the Federal Government provides roughly one-half of all the money that is spent in the State highway budget, State highway transportation budget. Half of that money is Federal money appropriated by the Congress and approved by the President.

Why we have not had a transportation bill that lasted for more than 2 years, since 2008—we have passed some short-term funding provisions and authorization provisions for transportation that lasts as little as a few days—a few days. This undercuts Governors and undercuts mayors around the country. It prevents them from making long-term investments in critical transportation projects.

Let me give a good example. State Route 1 Delaware runs from I–95 to the north, north-south, right past Dover, our State capital, passing Dover Air Force Base, and heads on down to the southern part of our State, where we raise more chickens and soybeans in Sussex County, DE, than any other county in America. It is a county that has more five-star beaches than anywhere else in America.

When I had the privilege of being Governor of Delaware, we actually built, modernized, and expanded State Route 1. We replaced about 40 traffic lights with a four- or five- or six-lane limited access highway that cuts not in half but greatly eliminates bottlenecks and expedites the flow of traffic in my State. It took over a decade—maybe a dozen years—from start to finish.

Why did it take that long? It is because these projects need some things. You have to take some time to plan the project. You have to take some time to fund the project. You have to take time to contract the project through competitive bids. You have to get the permits for the project. Sometimes there is litigation to work through. It is part of what has to be done to build a major road, highway or bridge in a State. It does not take just a few weeks to do this. It does not take just a few months to do this. It can take years.

In the case of State Route 1—in a little State—it took years, roughly a dozen of them. And without the certainty in the future that the Federal funding will be there for a project that is almost impossible to do it well and, frankly, without that kind of certainty, it is really expensive to do these projects. Stop-and-go. ''Stop-and-go'' means stop and pay lot more money for the projects we are trying to build.

Yet even though we know our States, our counties, our cities, and our businesses are counting on us in this body to do our jobs, we let them down time and time again. What is worse is that Congress has known about this problem for just about a decade—for almost a decade.

It was in 2005 that Congress included provisions in transportation legislation to create not one but two blue ribbon commissions. For what purpose? Will it help us to figure out how to pay for highways, bridges, and transit systems which we are not smart enough to figure this out? Why don't we put together some commissions and let the experts come in and they can help us out? We received the reports and the recommendations. We just never acted on them.

In 2008, these two Commissions delivered reports summarizing the advice of countless experts and giving us a roadmap to fixing the problems for good. Among all of their recommendations, one idea was stressed above all the rest: gradually raise transportation user fees and then index them to inflation going forward.

Despite understanding the problem and the smartest solutions for nearly a decade, we have only shirked our responsibility to agree on a solution again and again.

Rather than take advantage of those blue ribbon ideas, we have continued to kick the can down the road, continued to avoid doing what voters sent us here to do; that is, to make decisions, tough decisions, in the best interests of our country.

I stand here today to say it is high time we finally take care of business and do the job the American people sent us here to do.

My concern about this issue should come as no surprise to any of my colleagues. For years I have been outspoken about my desire to fully fund a multiyear transportation bill.

Government does have a clear role in ensuring that our country has modern, high-quality roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems. That is why the Framers of our Constitution had the good sense to as much as say so in that Constitution. Unfortunately, it seems to me that our courage and willingness to fulfill this responsibility continues to escape us. Instead, we avoid tough choices and simply do things such as smooth pensions or steal Customs fees. Sometimes we will steal Customs fees that are not due for maybe 6, 7, 8 years into the future, and we steal that future money and use it to pay for a couple of months' worth of road, highway, and bridge construction today. We borrow mine safety funds. We apply other bandaids as well.

The standard justification for each of these short-term patches has been that we need just a little more time to work out the details of a long-term plan. Just give us a little more time, and we will work this out. But, as usual, during the 10 months we gave ourselves when we passed the last short-term extension, which, as I recall, was early last August—the 12th time we have done this in 6 years, in case anyone has lost count—we have come no closer to a solution.

The Washington Post last summer may have put it best, and here is what they said: ''Congress doesn't need more time, Congress needs more spine.''

Albert Einstein once said that the definition of insanity is doing something over and over again and expecting a different result. Today, I am asking our colleagues to join me and others to help stop this insanity. If we work together, I know we can find a way to invest in the 21st-century transportation system our States, our cities, and our businesses deserve and need in order to compete in a global marketplace. In an effort to do just that, Senator BOXER and I have introduced a measure that would at least get us started, taking a constructive step that would align the expiration of transportation programs with the funding available in the highway trust fund.

What we have right now is that at the end of this month, the authorization for spending Federal money for these roads, highways, bridges, and transit projects—the authorizations to spend that money expires, effectively stopping the use of Federal money for these purposes at the end of this month. We can't let that happen.

The authorization ends at, we will say right here, the end of May, in about 10 days. Meanwhile, the actual funds in the transportation trust fund, the highway trust fund, are good until the end of July. So the legislation Senator BOXER has joined me in introducing says: At least, if we do nothing else, let's align the end of the authorization—now May 31—to the end of the funding so that we can at least continue the work that is being done in States across the country in the meantime. If we work together, I know we can find a way forward.

We have introduced this legislation, and this adjustment will keep the Congress from putting this issue, we hope, on the back burner yet again.

We hope this will increase the likelihood that we can finally sit down and come to a long-term solution not this fall, not next year, but this summer. I know there are some who say: Well, let's just push this off until December. We have done that before and we can do that again. I just say to my friends, we have a way of—we are getting to the elections. We are getting into the election cycle for President later this year. Maybe there are some who feel that will be helpful to us in finding a way to come together and funding a transportation project. I would beg to differ. I think if we don't get it done sooner rather than later, if we don't make those tough decisions now, we are not going to make them when the caucuses are gathered in Iowa and the primary voters are starting to get riled up in New Hampshire and South Carolina. That is not going to help us do our jobs.

There is a friend of mine who likes to talk about stopgap funding and the need to make a long-term commitment to America's growth and success. He says it is something like what we do now. It is something like taking a road trip—maybe a summer road trip across the country—stopping to fill up our cars, our trucks, our minivans with gas 1 gallon at a time. Instead of filling up, we stop at a gas station and we get 1 gallon, and then we go down the road and a little while later we stop at another gas station and we buy another gallon. It is wasteful. It wastes time. It wastes money. It is no way to take a trip across the country with your family, and I can assure my colleagues it is no way to build a transportation system for a world-class power—America.

In any event, as I said earlier, I took two or three ideas away from the elections last year. No. 1, Americans want us to work together; No. 2, they want us to get things done; and No. 3, they want us to do everything we can to enhance and strengthen our economic recovery.

Finally finding an agreement on a way to pass a fully funded 6-year transportation bill would help us do all three. We would demonstrate that we can work together. We would demonstrate that we can get things done for States and cities and counties across America. No. 3, we really would strengthen our economic recovery. We wouldn't just put 600,000 or 700,000 people to work across America building roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems; we would do a lot more than that. That is important. A lot of jobs need to be filled, and a lot of people would love to have those jobs.

As it turns out, the McKinsey Global Institute recently reported that making a major effort to repair and improve our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems could add about 1.5 percent to our annual GDP growth and create at least 1.8 million jobs. Let me say that again. Making a major effort to repair and improve our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems could add about 1.5 percent to annual GDP growth. Keep in mind that GDP growth I think in the last quarter was only about 1 percent. This kind of investment could add another 1.5 percent to annual GDP growth and create almost 2 million jobs.

By failing to pass a long-term transportation bill, we are sacrificing this potential growth and job creation. It is a little bit like leaving money on a table—in this case, a lot of it on a table.

The Federal Government shares the responsibility with State governments to make investments in their aging infrastructure. As I said earlier, the Federal Government—when States spend money on roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems, whether it is in New Hampshire or Delaware, roughly half of that money is coming from the Federal Government. Our States are counting on us to be a partner in funding our transportation systems that the families and businesses we represent count on every day. When a Federal policy fails to plan for the future, we leave these people in the lurch.

The highway trust fund has several dedicated revenue streams in the form of various user fees, as we know. These fees haven't been adjusted in over two decades. During that time, the purchasing power of transportation has nearly been cut in half. There have been increases in the price of concrete, asphalt, steel, and labor. The 18.3-cent Federal gas tax that we set up in 1993 is now worth less than a dime. The 24-cent diesel tax is worth less than 15 cents.

The Congressional Budget Office put together the chart here on my left that shows the growing difference between the highway trust fund, the money we put out for transportation projects, and the money we take in from user fees. I would say we were doing reasonably good from 1998 to 2014. Every 6 years, we see it go up and then it drops down, and then it goes up and then it drops down. That is a 6-year transportation authorization bill.

Look what happened starting this year.

I might add that over the last several years, a lot of this money was just transferred out of the general fund, not money we actually raised. Then we borrowed most of that money from around the world.

But we get to the year 2015, and look what happens. At the end of the year, every year up through 2025, this will be the shortfall. I think it adds up to about $140 billion by 2020. One does not have to be an accountant to know we have a problem when what we are spending outpaces what we collect more and more each year.

We need to find a long-term solution that we can agree on to fix this problem, and we need to do it this summer. We don't need to do it this fall. We don't need to do it next winter. We need to do it this summer. Again, I talked about kicking the can into a Presidential election year. If we don't do it this summer, my fear is we won't do it at all—at least not a long-term bill.

Many of my colleagues have said we must wait until we can enact comprehensive tax reform that creates revenues to solve this problem. As a strong supporter of tax reform, I hope we can find a way to reform our Tax Code, find a way to generate some revenues that can be used to invest in the country's roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems. As I understand, this idea has support from not only President Obama but also from the House Ways and Means Committee Chairman PAUL RYAN, and that is encouraging.

One thing I know for sure is that this idea is a lot better than kicking the can down the road. Let's be honest—we have been talking about tax reform for years. It is one of the most complicated problems Congress is facing. We can't just wait around letting our highways and transit systems that people count on deteriorate while we negotiate the incredibly tough decisions surrounding tax reform efforts. Furthermore, tax reform only offers one-time revenues that won't fix the long-term problem with the highway trust fund.

I believe we have to have a viable backup plan in case a bipartisan deal on tax reform continues to elude the Congress. That is why I talked to literally a dozen Members of the House and the Senate from both parties and I asked them to share with me their most thoughtful ideas of what I hope could become an ''all of the above'' transportation funding proposal that we expect to unveil at the beginning of next month. I urge any of my colleagues with serious thoughts on how to shore up the highway trust fund to bring us their ideas and join this effort because I hope to present such a plan, as I said earlier, very soon and to make sure that we don't once again kick this can down the road. There is time to act. It is not next year. It is not around Christmastime. It is this summer.

Gas prices this Memorial Day weekend will be lower than any Memorial Day in recent memory and are likely to stay that way for at least a while longer. The prediction is that they are actually going to start dropping again as we move into summer.

There is an amazing coalition of stakeholders from all parts of the community—frankly, all parts of our country geographically—and throughout the business sector and our government as well, and they support a long-term transportation bill. They are businesses, labor groups, construction companies, transits, retail businesses, manufacturing businesses, and a lot of American families. Their message to us is the same: It is time to do the right thing. It is time for us to do our jobs. It is time for us to give America the roads, the highways, the bridges, and transit systems that we can be proud of and that will help our Nation to continue to grow and to be great.

Mr. President, thank you so much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY).

The Senator from New Hampshire.

## EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very important issue to my State of New Hampshire, and that is American trade and our ability to create more jobs in New Hampshire and in the United States of America by giving our businesses the opportunity to sell to consumers around the world since our businesses are creating the very best products and technology, and their ability to sell to those around the world is going to create more jobs in New Hampshire and in this country.

I also wish to speak about an important financing mechanism to businesses in New Hampshire and to businesses in this country, and that is the Export-Import Bank.

When traveling throughout New Hampshire and meeting with businesses both small and large, what I hear most often is this: In Washington, please make it easier, in terms of the regulatory environment and the tax environment, for us to do what we do best, and that is create jobs and put people to work. I have also heard we want more opportunities to sell what we produce to other countries in the world, and we also want opportunities to make sure financing is available to increase opportunities for New Hampshire businesses to export to other countries around the world.

An important tool for New Hampshire businesses is the Export-Import Bank, which is set to expire next month, at the end of June, and that is why getting the bill pending on the floor is important. I fought to ensure that there is a way forward to secure a path for a vote on the Export-Import Bank reauthorization before it expires at the end of June.

I thank our leader for committing to allow us an opportunity to extend this important financing mechanism to businesses in New Hampshire to ensure that mechanism is still available and that those New Hampshire jobs continue and that we can continue to grow our economy.

In New Hampshire, the Export-Import Bank supports $416 million in exports and has helped 36 New Hampshire businesses over the last 7 years. Its continued existence is not only important to the Granite State economy, but it translates to over 2,300 jobs that are supported by the opportunity to have financing available through the Export-Import Bank to New Hampshire.

I met with New Hampshire exporters from around the State who have been able to grow their businesses and create more jobs by utilizing the Ex-Im financing to export goods and services overseas. In fact, in December I hosted a roundtable in New Hampshire at the Seaport International Forest Products in Noshua. In the past, they have been able to use Export-Import financing. They were gracious enough to hold a roundtable when Fred Hopper, the head of the Export-Import Bank, came to New Hampshire and met with businesses in New Hampshire to allow them to give him feedback as to how the Bank was working and how important it was to their ability to obtain this financing and expand their exports overseas. In fact, one of the participants in that roundtable, Jerry Boyle, who is the leader of Boyle Energy and Technology Services in Concord, explained how he grew his business 75 percent in the past few years because of the opportunity to use Ex-Im financing.

Make no mistake—failure to renew the Bank's charter would cause us to lose jobs in New Hampshire and lose jobs in this country and would hurt the economy at a time when we should be focusing on making it easier for businesses to create jobs and making sure our businesses have opportunity and access to markets overseas to create more American trade.

I will continue to push this body to reauthorize Ex-Im so that New Hampshire businesses can continue to have access to this financing, can continue to grow their opportunities to create more jobs in New Hampshire by using this financing and to sell their goods and services overseas to create jobs.

I want to address the critics of this Bank. I look at this and I wonder—we are competing in a global economy, and so many of our competitors are actually offering even greater financing mechanisms for their businesses. So without this opportunity for our businesses, we would be putting ourselves at a competitive disadvantage. In fact, the Ex-Im Bank actually has a lower default rate than commercial loans and returns money to the Treasury.

If someone asked me about the Ex-Im Bank, I would tell them that it creates American jobs and returns money to the Treasury to help pay down our debt. If every Federal agency were asked that question, that would be an easy question to answer, wouldn't it? We would probably be a lot farther along in dealing with our $18 trillion in debt.

To me, this is a program that allows us to create more New Hampshire jobs and more American jobs. We have to get this done. I am glad we have a commitment to have a vote on it in this body to allow us to reauthorize it before it expires. Again, it returns money to the Treasury and creates American jobs. Imagine if we could say that about every Federal program.

I wish to talk about another issue that is very important to jobs in New Hampshire, and that is trade promotion authority, which we are currently debating and which is pending on the Senate floor. This will have a real impact on New Hampshire's economy and create thousands of jobs in my State.

In 2014, New Hampshire exported $4.4 billion worth of goods and services and exports and supported about 23,000 good-paying New Hampshire jobs. Over the past decade, we have seen Granite State exports increase by 175 percent. As a testament to America's entrepreneurial spirit, almost 90 percent of New Hampshire's exporters are small or medium-sized businesses.

Last week, I had the opportunity to visit Mercury Systems, which designs and builds defense and commercial electronics in Hudson, NH. Since opening in Hudson in 2014, Mercury Systems has more than doubled its workforce from 70 employees to now 170 employees—thanks in part to their opportunity to export what they manufacture.

In April, I visited Corfin Industries in Salem. Corfin provides robotic processing services that are used by the defense, medical, and telecommunication industries. Corfin relies on exports and access to international markets, which has helped to create 22 new jobs in New Hampshire, and now they see a growing portion of their sales going to exports—American trade creating jobs.

There are many other important companies in New Hampshire that support trade promotion authority, and