

and only be kicked down the road, leaving millions of jobs behind. Even with the looming deadline, Republicans are showing no haste in forming a plan to address our Nation's crumbling roads, railroads, bridges, and transit systems.

We have one of the most unique makeups in one of our committees that this body has ever seen. We have one of the most liberal Members of the Senate, BARBARA BOXER, and her counterpart is one of the most conservative Members of this body, JIM INHOFE from Oklahoma. They know the importance. These two divergent political spectrums know that we have to do something about the highway system. They are going to put out a bill. They are going to authorize it. Then we need to figure out a way to fund that.

Republicans don't seem interested in that. Even with its looming deadline, Republicans are showing no haste in forming a plan or to develop one for this system that we have to do something about. Congressional Republicans see no urgency to schedule hearings, to mark up a bill, to take testimony in other ways or to make the highway trust fund solvent. With every day that passes, our Federal highway trust fund inches closer and closer to insolvency.

It is clear we will need to get to that reauthorization of the highway program either this week or next week. But we won't. Look at the schedule. It means we are left with July. Looking at the Senate calendar for July, assuming that the Republican leader will continue to keep the Senate out of session on Fridays, we will have, in reality, 15 days to reauthorize the Federal highway system—15 days. Fifteen session days is precious little time, especially when Republicans don't feel any urgency to solve this problem. Of course, we all know how this is going to play out. This is straight out of the Republican's playbook—the manufactured crisis playbook.

They have written the book, and they are adding chapters to it every week of this Congress. Republicans will drag their feet until the very last minute, refusing to work with us on a long-term solution to our Nation's infrastructure woes. Then, when the deadline is imminent, the Republican leader will offer yet another short-term extension to stave off another disaster of his own making.

This is and should be unacceptable to everyone here. We already have had 33 Republican short-term fixes. We do not need a 34th. But that is where we are headed. That is too bad. What we do need is a Republican Party that sees the value of a robust, long-term investment in our Nation's highways. We need a Republican Party that sees what President Eisenhower saw 50 years ago—half a century—that investing in our infrastructure is a shot in the arm to our economy.

There are hundreds of thousands of shovel-ready jobs just waiting for Congress to act. On the other hand, failing

to meet our country's infrastructure needs will be catastrophic. The American Society of Civil Engineers predicts that our economy would lose \$1 trillion unless we invest in surface transportation—\$1 trillion. Let's not forget the safety implications of sitting on our hands. Half of our roads are in poor condition. Tens of thousands of bridges across the country are structurally deficient. Railroads are without important, lifesaving braking systems. They need to be refurbished and some parts of them reinvented. Doing nothing is not and should not be an option.

The Republican leader should change course and abandon his policy of governing by crisis. We can get started on a long-term, bipartisan reauthorization of the Federal highway program today. All we need is for Republican Members of Congress and their leaders to focus on American jobs and the traveling American public's safety. They have not done that. This is too bad.

Mr. President, there are a number of Senators on the floor.

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the time equally divided, with the Democrats controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Michigan.

MICHIGAN PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I am truly blessed to represent the people of Michigan in the Senate. My State was carved out in one era by the ice age and again 200 years ago by the Congress. It is comprised of more than just two beautiful peninsulas bordered by four Great Lakes.

Since our Nation's founding, Michigan has been at the frontier of America, helping to build a stronger and more secure country. The Northwest Ordinance, affirmed by the very first Congress, created the midwestern region from which the Michigan Territory would be born. In the 19th century, pioneers moved to what was then the western frontier to settle in Michigan and its neighboring States.

The Peters family was among them. My family made the long journey from New York and settled in Rochester, MI, in the early 1840s. They were among the earliest pioneers to settle in my State. From that time on, generations of Michiganders pioneered a State de-

voted to great public education. While the Northwest Ordinance made primary education a priority and stated that "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" in the new territory, higher education also had a place that made our State great very early. Twenty years before the founding of the State of Michigan, the University of Michigan was founded, one of the first public universities in the country. Later, Michigan State University would become one of the pioneer land grant universities. While the two schools may be rivals on the gridiron, they have long complimented each other to the benefit of our State.

Today, Michigan is home to 93 universities, colleges, and community colleges. Michigan grew rapidly as migrants from across the country and immigrants from around the world were drawn to our supplies of timber, ore, arable land, and abundant fresh water. As a new century dawned across America, Michigan continued to grow with the advent of industrialization and mass manufacturing, from mining and forestry at the western tip of the Upper Peninsula to the booming auto factories of Detroit. Michigan embodied the growing optimism, opportunity, and prosperity that would be America's crowning achievement in the 20th century.

Michigan factories would turn into the great arsenal of democracy, building the armadas that would defeat tyranny, win the Second World War, and, in the process, create America's middle class. During World War II, my father, Herb Peters, was a proud soldier in Eisenhower's Army, helping free France from Nazi occupation. It was there that he would meet my mother, Madeleine Vignier, a beautiful young French woman. They were married and raised me and my two sisters, Gigi and Jackie, in a typical middle-class home. A few years ago, with my late father, I joined the Sons of the American Revolution. My forefather, William Garrett, was a member of the Virginia militia and served alongside General George Washington at Valley Forge.

My great-grandfather, Julian Peters, served with the Michigan infantry during the Civil War. I am proud to follow earlier generations of patriots who served their country and were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom and liberty. But like millions of Americans, I am also the son of an immigrant. America's shores were new to my mother, but they provided an incredible expanse of opportunity that people across the globe continue to dream of. My mother worked long hours as a nurse's aide and fought for a better workplace for herself and her coworkers, helping to organize her workplace and later serving as a union steward.

Michigan's strong labor movement and our manufacturing sector helped build economic opportunities for millions of Americans. Standing together to call for fair wages, safer workplaces,

and better hours, Michigan workers and their families helped build the middle class and make the American dream a reality for many. I am honored to embody such a uniquely American experience—the descendant of an American Revolutionary War soldier and the son of a foreign-born naturalized citizen—and to carry on these rich traditions that continue to make our Nation proud, diverse, and strong.

But while my story is uniquely American, it is not so different from nearly 10 million Michiganders of varied backgrounds who have come together to make our State an extraordinary, special place. Michigan is unique in that we are the only State made up of two peninsulas. Separated for thousands of years by waterways carved by retreating glaciers, our peninsulas permanently united with Michigan statehood and finally connected with the opening of the Mackinac Bridge almost 60 years ago.

The Mackinac Bridge is one of the longest suspension bridges in the world. It remains an engineering marvel to this day and a symbol of how Michiganders can come together to accomplish great things. Financed with an innovative public-private bond structure, over 10,000 workers contributed to this 5-mile span, implementing the vision and planning of 350 engineers. In our State, it is simply known as “The Bridge.” Its construction unleashed economic growth for our State, increasing tourism in the Upper Peninsula and providing a new avenue for goods to be hauled south while agricultural products and manufactured goods flowed north.

As Michigan and our Nation transition to a 21st-century economy, we would do well to draw on the engineering know-how, skilled workforce, and boldness to invest in transformative infrastructure that made the Mackinac Bridge possible. Michigan’s products move and feed the Nation. We invented the modern automobile, advanced manufacturing, and America’s middle class.

We are the second most agriculturally diverse State in the Nation. Our blueberries, apples, cherries, and sugar beets are just a few of the 300 crops we grow and ship across the country and the world. Our incredible farmers, growers, and producers use Michigan’s unique climate and resources to feed people across our country and around the world.

Whether we are talking about our State, our Nation or our successful industries, we cannot rest on our laurels. We are in constant competition. The coming decades will see rapid growth abroad, but I know our Nation will continue to lead the world with our ability to innovate and efficiently align capital and talent to maximize the strengths of our workforce.

Today’s small business in Grand Rapids or a start-up in Detroit can access consumers across the world. I know that Michigan will be at the cutting edge of this new global economy.

Michigan is at the forefront of developing the transformative technologies that will remake America and help our country sustain its stature and prominence.

Southeast Michigan has more engineers per capita than any State in the country, which is one of the reasons Detroit is home to the first field patent office outside of Washington, DC. Our automakers, parts suppliers, and advanced manufacturers are constantly innovating—and not just generations of new goods but also intellectual property. If you can make it, we can find a way to make it faster, lighter, more efficient, safer, and more affordable.

Incremental innovation meaningfully improves lives, but as a nation we must keep working toward the next big thing. Investments in education and basic scientific research are the down-payment on our future. It is particularly critical that we continue these investments at a time when our country faces so many unique challenges.

Growing income inequality is a threat to our middle class, our economy, and our democracy. While globalization is opening new markets for American goods, it is also hollowing out the mid-level jobs that are the foundation of the American middle class. Without a strong middle class we cannot have a strong economy, and without a strong middle class we simply cannot have a strong democracy.

There are many ideas about how to deal with these challenges, but history has taught us that increased productivity is the No. 1 driver of economic progress and, in my view, the key to American greatness. Economic historians tell us that after hundreds of years of zero economic growth, groundbreaking innovations changed the face of commerce.

In the mid-1700s came the cotton gin, steam engine, and railroads, followed by more breakthroughs in the 1800s, electricity, the internal combustion engine, and even indoor plumbing. Before indoor plumbing, a recent study estimated the average housewife spent nearly 150 hours per year walking back and forth to gather 3.5 tons of water for her family to cook, clean, and drink. The technology of indoor plumbing alone unleashed enormous gains in productivity.

Today, we have tablets and smartphones and social media, but if we are going to solve the tough challenges facing the middle-class families and all those who aspire to be in the middle class, we will need to unleash even more productivity and more innovation. We will need to discover the next big thing, and I don’t know what that next big thing will be, but I do know the Federal Government must continue investing in the seed corn of basic research and development.

From the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams at Michigan State to Wayne State’s bioresearch facility, to the University of Michigan’s extensive joint

projects with NASA, our State’s universities are leading the way in research.

The research being conducted at our universities is also creating jobs in Michigan as these transformative technologies are commercialized. Students are not just inventing new technologies, they are also inventing their own jobs and companies.

For example, using technology developed at the University of Michigan for NASA to measure electric fields resulting from dust storms blowing across Mars, a startup spun off of these efforts is now creating jobs on Earth to help an electric company monitor their utility lines.

Innovation is creating new industries in Michigan and is also revolutionizing many of our existing industries. Advanced sensors, robotics, and big data will allow precision agriculture that boosts productivity and conserves natural resources.

One industry that has always meant jobs for Michigan is, of course, the automobile industry. We are on the verge of an automotive technological revolution that will allow vehicles to communicate their location, speed, and other data electronically with each other and our transportation infrastructure as well.

Research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates this technology can reduce accidents by 80 percent, save fuel, and cut congestion at a time when Americans spend an estimated 5 vacation days a year stuck in traffic jams.

When more than 30,000 Americans are killed in accidents on our roads and highways every year, the advancements of this kind of technology will literally save thousands of lives.

This means active crash-avoidance technology that stops accidents before they happen, and before long, autonomous vehicles that drive themselves. This is truly revolutionary technology packaged with horsepower and torque, my favorite part of the car.

But the Federal Government has to do its part to develop and protect this technology. One of my top priorities, as a new member of the Senate commerce committee, is to ensure that vehicles have the wireless spectrum they need to communicate with each other and to make our roads safer.

As manufacturing and technology merge, Michigan is prepared to lead the way. What were once separate industries are now merging into complements in a battle for the future that America must win.

Federal investment in research and development is just that, an investment that has paid off many times over. Investment in research supports the new technologies and industries of the future, drives job creation, and provides technologies critical to our national security.

Necessary Federal investment in infrastructure and innovation is only possible if those of us in Congress take

our job seriously as stewards of taxpayer dollars and look for places to avoid unnecessary wasteful spending.

We also will not be able to accomplish anything without embracing pragmatism and bipartisanship. We cannot focus on whether ideas come from a Republican or from a Democrat. We need to focus only on whether the idea has merit and is good for the country. This is why I have spent my first 5 months in office the way I intend to spend the rest of my career in public service, reaching across the aisle to find common ground and the practical solutions that will make our government work better, drive innovation and competitiveness, and keep Michigan and America safe and strong.

I have introduced legislation with Senator GARDNER from Colorado to increase oversight of duplicative spending and force Congress to act on deficit reduction.

I worked with Senator ERNST from Iowa to introduce legislation to extend a tax credit for small businesses that support their activated military reservist employees.

Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma and I worked on a bill that would ensure Federal agencies use remanufactured auto parts when maintaining their fleets, an idea that will save natural resources and taxpayer dollars while supporting our country's remanufactured parts industry. Just 2 days ago, this bill unanimously passed the Senate.

I worked with Senator RISCH from Idaho to move legislation through the small business committee to extend and preserve the Small Business Administration's 7(a) Loan Program, so our Nation's small businesses can access the capital they need to grow and create jobs.

Senator CORNYN, Senator GRAHAM, and I introduced legislation to create a bipartisan commission to examine our Nation's judicial system from the top to the bottom and to make sure it is working for all Americans.

Senator SULLIVAN and I worked together to introduce a bill to cut excise taxes for small craft distillers, a growth industry in Michigan, Alaska, and America.

I am also proud to say the legislation I introduced with Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana to provide training for medical professionals to identify victims of human trafficking was also signed into law after it passed the Senate as part of a larger effort to combat human trafficking.

I was sent to the Senate to represent the people of Michigan, and they want Congress to work together in a bipartisan way to solve the challenges facing our country. We must focus more on what we have in common and less on our differences. We should work on ideas that are good for our country and good for our States. I have worked to be a practical problem solver in my first few months, and it is what I intend to do in the years ahead.

There is much to be done, and I will work tirelessly for the people of Michigan. My weeks in Washington, unfortunately, keep me apart from my wife Colleen and my children, Madeleine, Alana, and Gary, Jr., but their love and steadfast support is with me each and every day. Colleen was raised by her parents Raul and Kathy Ochoa in Oakland County—like me—and together we share a passion for public service. I am so pleased Colleen and Madeleine are here with me today in the Senate Gallery.

On the Senate floor, we are standing on the shoulders of giants. This includes our Nation's Founding Fathers and more recent predecessors. My staff and I recently moved into the Hart Senate Office Building, named after Senator Phil Hart from Michigan, a man rightfully known as the "Conscience of the Senate" and a role model for all of us.

I could not be happier that my office will be right around the corner from my close friend, mentor, colleague, and respected leader in the Senate Senator DEBBIE STABENOW, and I am honored that DEBBIE has joined me on the Senate floor for this speech.

Of course, I am deeply honored to succeed Senator Carl Levin, another one of my mentors and a man who defined what it means to be a public servant. The careers of Senators Levin, Hart, Riegle, Griffin, and other Michiganders who preceded me provided the foundation on which I hope to build our shared future and create the best Michigan possible—not only the kind of Michigan we want to live in but the kind of Michigan our children and grandchildren will want to spend their lives in, a Michigan that is a magnet for migration and unbridled opportunity for families and small businesses, and a State that will lead the world in innovation.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and Michiganders across the State to make a better future for all of us a reality. Together, we will continue to build a State and a country that embody the opportunity, the possibility, and the promise that has made our country a shining beacon for so many around the globe.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Democratic leader.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR PETERS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to take a minute to express my appreciation to the junior Senator from Michigan in his maiden speech. It was terrific. It was delivered so well, and that is what Michigan is all about. We appreciate it very, very much.

He has big shoes to fill, those of Carl Levin. We all know what a giant he was in the Senate. From Senator Levin to Senator STABENOW, they have both

said: GARY PETERS can do it. I am impressed with him very much. He is a team player. He is willing to do the hard lifting. I appreciate that very much. He mentioned Senator Levin, of course, whom we all admired so very much. Also, I wish to take a minute to talk about his partner in the Senate today, DEBBIE STABENOW. As he mentioned, she is a part of Senate leadership. She is there because she deserves it. There is no one who works harder than DEBBIE STABENOW. And if there were a work ethic role model for my friend GARY PETERS to follow, DEBBIE STABENOW is the perfect person.

So I thank the junior Senator from Michigan for being who he is. We have come to know who he is in 6 months, and we like him very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, I am very deeply appreciative of our leader's comments. Thank you very much.

I just wish to add my words of pride in the fact that we have such a wonderful Senator now coming to the Senate and the fact that he is fighting so hard for Michigan and already doing a wonderful job.

I am so pleased he is my partner, and it was a wonderful speech.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I congratulate the junior Senator from Michigan for his opening speech in the Senate. My State of Illinois is separated from his State of Michigan by another State and a Great Lake, but we have many things in common.

People of Chicago and Illinois, many of them, spend a lot of money in the State of Michigan and particularly in western Michigan. We love the Senator's State. It is a beautiful State. Many of us vacation there and get to know the people.

We have so much in common as midwesterners, looking at the world from our vantage point, smack dab in the middle of this country, and bringing to the conversation in the Senate many of the values that have guided our lives and inspired our families. I listened carefully and thought it is amazing that we have such parallel backgrounds—a father who can trace his family roots back to the Revolutionary War and, in both cases, mothers who were immigrants to this country. So being a first-generation American, I am sure the Senator feels as I do, a special honor, standing on the floor of the Senate, representing a State as great as Michigan—or Illinois.

I wish to say my colleague's background in the House of Representatives prepared him well for this challenge. Although he follows one of the greats in the history of the Senate, Carl Levin, he brings to this job an extraordinary talent and a great partnership with Senator STABENOW. Already, the two of them have been in contact with me about Michigan's needs as they relate to our Department of Defense—and