

have had bipartisan Democrats and Republicans working together and pleading with the President and the White House, starting with Simpson-Bowles, which was a bipartisan effort. The Gang of 6, the Committee of 12, the supercommittee were all bipartisan efforts.

I was part of the dinner group, which was an effort to plead with the President to do something together to address this problem and being turned down time after time after time. Now we are sailing toward the end of this Presidency, and obviously nothing is going to be done even though the Social Security trust fund is going to expire on the President's watch. They will come up with some gimmick and shift some money around and so forth, thereby just putting us further in debt and kicking the can down the road. They have to cover this because politically they will not allow this to happen, but they will do it in a way that makes our situation even worse.

As the President careens toward retirement and his legacy, one of those legacies will be questioned by people for years and years into the future: Why didn't we do something when we had the chance on a bipartisan basis with support from both parties? Why was the President so adamant about not doing anything to address this problem?

Time is running out. Social Security disability will collapse under the President's leadership before he escapes at the end of 2016. You can tell how frustrated I am, but I will keep coming down here and talking about this stuff and hopefully—well, we don't want it to happen under a crisis. We don't want to be days away from bankruptcy, so we move some money around in the Federal budget and so forth and so on, take it from Peter to pay Paul, put us further in debt, and then kick the can down the road.

I feel for the next President, whoever that might be. They are going to get a can of worms because we didn't do anything about this during this tenure.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015— MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermonters—like many Americans—are frustrated. They are frustrated when they see short-term patches that do not make investments in our crumbling infrastructure. They are frustrated with seeing meaningful policy advance, while Congress bickers over how to pay for it—and at what expense to other critical programs.

Passing a long-term authorization to make needed improvements to our aging roads and bridges is a matter of common sense. It is a matter of safety. And quite frankly, for us in Congress, it's our job.

After 11 short-term extensions over the course of 3 years, Congress finally approved MAP-21 in 2012. Now, two short-term extensions later and faced with another expiration deadline, we have a choice: another patch, or pass a meaningful, long-term transportation authorization that will give our States the ability to build and repair roads, bridges, and byways, to promote rail safety and transit, and to invest in the critical infrastructure that supports our cities and towns, enables interstate and intrastate commerce, and creates jobs for American workers. The time to pass a plan for long-term transportation funding is now.

Vermonters take great pride in our historic downtowns and small communities. In our cities and towns, we have a culture of getting things done. We find a way to accomplish our shared goals. But, when those shared goals rely largely on a Federal funding stream that is unreliable at best, and uncertain at worst, it makes it impossible to double down on the investments needed to keep the cars, buses, and trucks moving on our roads. We can invest in bridges and roads overseas. We do it all the time. We decided to spend a couple of trillion dollars in Iraq. We didn't use any offsets; we just put it on the credit card. As one Vermonter said to me back home: We spend billions upon billions of dollars to build roads and bridges over there, and then they blow them up. Why don't we spend a little bit of that money here at home, and we will take care of those roads and bridges?

As much as we invest in bridges and roads overseas, we must do so right here at home. Look at this bridge show in this picture I have in the Chamber. It is located in East Montpelier, just about 5 miles from where I was born. It was built in 1936—the year my parents were married. It is in dire need of repair. Weather, the sometimes very harsh Vermont climate, age, and traffic volume—more than 4,400 vehicles cross it per day, 10 percent of which are trucks—have led to the deterioration of the bridge. It is one of nearly 300 long and short bridges in Vermont that have been deemed structurally deficient. The East Montpelier Bridge re-

mains open—at least for now. It will be replaced in 2018, with a price tag of \$7.3 million, about 2 minutes' worth of the money we wasted in Iraq. It is an issue of safety. It is an issue of economic certainty. It is a commonsense investment that has been delayed for too long because resources are far too scarce. I am willing to bet the same could be said of all 50 States represented in this body.

We all agree that a long-term transportation bill means safe bridges, paved roads, and completed railroads. But it also encourages innovative projects that incorporate public health, environmental, and social incentives. Look no further than Burlington, VT. A picturesque town nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain, it is home to a variety of innovative entrepreneurs and businesses, from high-tech hubs to specialty food producers. As our businesses and communities grow, Vermonters depend on safe and reliable modes of transportation to keep them connected.

Church Street is a pedestrian-only street that welcomes locals and visitors to enjoy the many vibrant shops and restaurants. As businesses begin to sprawl beyond the limits of Church Street and settle into new homes along Pine Street, the city has invested in safe modes of travel to ensure accessibility. The Bike Path Rehabilitation Project and the Safe Streets Collaborative are projects that consider the needs of the community as a whole—either in a vehicle, on foot, or pedaling.

Main Street—the heart of any Vermont downtown—is home to small businesses and services such as post offices, grocery stores, medical offices, and banks. In a rural State such as Vermont, investing in our infrastructure extends beyond bridges and roads. It is sidewalk repair. It is establishing crosswalks. It is widening roads to provide for parking, and it is installing such basic things as street lighting, refuse receptacles and landscaping.

After many years of economic decline in downtown Barre—one of our larger cities—the city's Main Street was left with empty storefronts and lonely streets. The community introduced the Big Dig—a multiyear effort to revitalize Main Street and City Hall Park. With funding sourced from Downtown Transportation Grants and Federal funding sourced through the Agency of Transportation, 200 State employees were able to relocate into a new office building in the heart of downtown.

Look at the before and after pictures. The differences are stark. These are the kinds of Federal investments, coupled with investments from States and towns, that can revitalize communities across the country. This project brought life back into Main Street. Businesses filled vacant office spaces, restaurants opened their doors, and the sidewalks welcomed locals and visitors alike. The transportation funding went beyond just improving the physical infrastructure; it was an investment in

the health and economy of the community.

The highway trust fund is not just about infrastructure; it is about jobs—jobs that cannot be shipped overseas.

Earlier this year, I met with Jeff Tucker, the president of Dubois & King. D&K is a Vermont owned and based consulting engineering firm which employs 100 people, including about 80 Vermonters. Jeff's frustration was clear: short-term highway trust fund extensions paralyze the ability of States and municipalities to plan. Jeff's company provides high quality engineering jobs with an average annual salary of over \$71,000. These jobs come with full benefits—health care, paid vacation, sick and holiday paid time off and retirement packages.

A significant portion of his business includes transportation-related engineering projects that originate from the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The Vermont Agency of Transportation creates a statewide plan based on the State's known Federal transportation funding share—something the agency has not been able to count on in a long time. There are thousands more examples of businesses around the country hampered in the same way. In a State like Vermont, a short-term construction season paired with a short-term funding stream is a terrible combination, for both the State and the companies that provide these services.

Now the Senate is debating how to move forward with a long-term investment in our roads and bridges and railways. It is an important debate. There is a lot about this policy proposal that I support. I share the concerns, however, of many that it will undermine the safety of riders, bikers, and pedestrians.

The policy is not perfect, but how we pay for it should also be considered. The highway trust fund has been supported for the most part by a user-fee driven system. Our roads and byways need our attention, but a long-term extension of this authorization, paid for by robbing from other critical programs, is as unsustainable as a network of short-term patches.

America is starving for real, certain infrastructure investment. The highway trust fund cannot limp forward on a continued series of short-term extensions. Our country's progress is being stalled, and it is time we start building for our future.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, last week the junior Senator from Arkansas objected to a request to vote on any of the five nominations to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. They have been waiting for 10 months for a vote. He did not want to debate the merits of any of these eminently qualified nominees. I think the junior Senator is dusting off the Republican playbook from the last Congress to try to do to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims what he could not do to the DC Circuit.

The caseload statistics of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims—as in other courts—have increased and decreased at various times. This does not mean that one Republican should be permitted to put up a wholesale blockade of nominees to a specific court preventing every single one of them from being considered on their merit by the full Senate. Furthermore, in contrast to the assertions made by the junior Senator for Arkansas, the number of new cases filed with the court since 2007 has actually increased by 13.4 percent.

Early in the last Republican administration, there was discussion about the caseload of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, but no Senate Republican voiced concern then. In fact, during the Bush administration, the Senate confirmed nine judges to the CFC—with the support of every Senate Republican. Only three CFC judges nominated by President Obama have received confirmation votes. This is the same double standard that Senate Republicans tried to apply to President Obama's D.C. Circuit nominees, when they filibustered and refused to permit any of President Obama's three pending D.C. Circuit nominees from receiving a vote last Congress.

Not a single Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee raised a concern about the CFC's caseload either during the committee hearings on these nominations last year or during the committee debate last year or this year. In blocking these five nominees, the junior Senator from Arkansas ignores the Senate Judiciary Committee's unanimous votes on these nominations in 2014 and again this year. He also disregards the chief judge who speaks on behalf of the entire court and the five past presidents of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims Bar Association who have urged the Senate to fill these vacancies.

In 2003, the now-chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee engaged in a debate on the caseload of this court. He said then: "I feel it is unfair to these Court of Federal Claims nominees to deny them a seat by bringing up this point at this late date." I hope that the junior Senator from Arkansas will heed these words and remove his objection to an up or down vote on these nominees. If he personally does not believe these judges need to be confirmed, he can certainly vote against them.

The fact is that all five of these nominees are impeccably qualified. One of the nominees, Armando Bonilla, would be the first Hispanic judge to hold a seat on the court, but the junior Senator from Arkansas objected. The nominee is strongly endorsed by the Hispanic National Bar Association and has spent his entire career—now spanning over two decades—as an attorney for the Department of Justice. He was hired out of law school in the Department's prestigious Honors Program, and has risen to become the Associate Deputy Attorney General in the Department.

Another nominee, Jeri Somers, retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, but the junior senator from Arkansas objected. The nominee spent over two decades serving first as a Judge Advocate General and then as a Military Judge in the U.S. Air Force and the District of Columbia's Air National Guard. In 2007, she became a Board judge with the U.S. Civilian Board of Contract Appeals and currently serves as its vice chair.

Mr. Bonilla and Ms. Somers are just two of the five nominees being blocked from consideration by one Senator. Both of them have dedicated the majority of their careers in service to our Nation. They deserve better than the treatment they are receiving from this Senate. I urge the Senate majority leader to move to confirmation votes on these well qualified nominees without further delay.

Since President Obama was sworn in as President of the United States, I am afraid Republicans have made it their priority to obstruct nominations put forward.

More than half a year into this new Congress, the Republican leadership has scheduled votes to confirm only five judicial nominees. Let me contrast that with the last 2 years of President George W. Bush's tenure. Democrats had taken over the Senate majority. If we treated Republican President Bush that way the new Republican Senate majority is treating Democratic President Obama only five judges would have been confirmed by today in 2007. Instead, we confirmed 25 district and circuit court judges by July 23, 2007.

Let me say that again because I want to make it clear that we would not play politics with judges because they are supposed to be outside of politics. By this time in the last 2 years of President Bush's term, when I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee, we had moved 25 judges through the process to confirmation. Today's Republican leadership has allowed only five of President Obama's judicial nominees to be confirmed.

In the last 2 years of President Bush's tenure the Democratic majority moved 68 district and circuit judges through the process to confirmation. And today, we find Republicans objecting to even considering highly qualified men and women to these judgeships. In the last 2 years of the Reagan term a Democratic majority confirmed 85 judges.

Twenty-five by this time in 2007, 68 in all during the last 2 years of President Bush's term. Only five for President Obama. Seventeen by this time in the last 2 years of President Reagan's term, 85 in all. Only five for President Obama.

You know all this does is politicize the Federal judiciary. They are an independent branch of government. The Senate ought to be confirming them. Let's not have a double standard. We made it clear we would not do

that with President Reagan and President Bush. We shouldn't do it with President Obama.

It is up to the majority leader and the Senate Republicans to demonstrate that they are not applying a double standard that is solely driven by who occupies the White House. The Senate should be confirming these long delayed U.S. Court of Federal Claims nominees and then proceeding to nine other judicial nominees pending on the Senate Executive Calendar.

I see my good friend on the floor.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise to talk about a very important amendment that Senator FEINSTEIN and I will be offering to the transportation bill when we move to consideration. That vote may be around 2 a.m., and then the clock will tick. But then at some point on Sunday, I am hoping that we will begin the process of considering amendments and, chief among them, should be the Feinstein-Wicker amendment to the bill regarding truck-length increases. Our amendment would authorize the Secretary of Transportation to require a truck size-and-weight study before promulgating a rule to increase the minimum length limitation for trucks.

Now I show to my colleagues and I show to the Presiding Officer a poster. What I am showing is a picture, a drawing of what we call twin 33's. This is the tractor trailer. Here is a 33-foot trailer, and here is another 33-foot trailer tacked on to the back of that. So twin 33's are long trucks—longer than is allowed in 39 States.

So far we have let the States make the decision about whether to accept these, and some 39 of our Federal States have decided: No, we don't want trucks this long with the twin 33 trailers on them in our States.

Our amendment would accept that decision on the part of the States. Our decision would allow those 39 States to continue to make that decision. Of course, the States that want trucks that long can make that decision themselves.

Why are we having to offer such an amendment on this highway and transportation bill? Because the Appropriations Committee, by a very close margin of some 16 yeases and 14 noes, has decided otherwise. Unless we act as a Senate, that legislation on the appropriations side of things will go forward and will become the law of the land, telling 39 States that they cannot make their own decisions on twin 33's.

So we would allow the States to continue to make this decision while the Secretary of Transportation promulgates a full rule to increase the minimum length limitation.

I will tell you that preliminary information from the U.S. Department of Transportation indicates that we don't need to go to mandatory twin 33's. The U.S. Department of Transportation has

concluded there should be no change to the current maximum truck length limit allowed on Federal highways.

Their preliminary report goes on to say: "The Department finds that the current data limitations are so profound that no changes in the relevant laws and regulations should be considered until these data limitations are overcome." So that is the counsel of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

I will say that I am not always bound by what the Federal departments say. As a matter of fact, I would stress that decisions are better made by the States and State legislators, Governors, and transportation commissions, but I do think it is instructive that even these people at the Federal level are counseling against this idea of a Federal mandate to all 50 States that they must move to the twin 33's. So that is the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Why is ROGER WICKER from Mississippi on the floor advocating for federalism and advocating for States making their own decisions, basically advocating against a Federal mandate for these long trucks?

I will tell you. I started hearing from folks. When this issue came before the Appropriations Committee, a group of people rose up and said: What are you doing? What are you thinking, mandating this to all 50 States without their consent?

So who is for the Feinstein-Wicker amendment and opposed to mandatory twin 33 trucks in all of our States? I will tell you who is opposed to it—advocates for highway and auto safety. AAA knows a little something about getting around the United States of America. AAA is for the Feinstein-Wicker amendment. The National Troopers Coalition knows a little something about safety on the highways. They are opposed to mandatory twin 33's.

I will also tell you it is very interesting that as for the Mississippi Trucking Association, you would think every trucker would want to be for this, make more money, and get to haul more stuff. The Mississippi Trucking Association contacted our office and said: We don't want this. Senator WICKER, other Members of the Senate and the House, oppose this Federal mandate that is about to come out of the Appropriations Committee and pass the Feinstein-Wicker amendment. The Mississippi Trucking Association is for our amendment and against twin 33's, along with a host of other trucking associations from east to west and from north to south.

I will tell you who else is opposed to mandatory twin 33's: the Mississippi Sheriffs' Association and a host of other States' sheriffs associations and the Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police and a host of other State associations of chiefs of police.

Did I mention that the Illinois State Senate unanimously passed a resolu-

tion in support of what the Feinstein-Wicker amendment would do and opposed mandatory twin 33's. The Illinois State Senate unanimously passed this resolution saying to the Congress: Leave it up to the State of Illinois. We know what is best for our State when it comes to infrastructure. We know what is best for our State when it comes to the safety of our citizens.

So it is people such as them. The Mississippi Transportation Commission, or MDOT, has passed a unanimous resolution asking us to oppose twin 33's on a mandatory basis.

Why are people so opposed to these? They haul a whole lot more. Obviously, some people would make a lot more money if they could have this much area in their trailers to haul things. So why are people opposed to it?

Well, they are concerned about—for one thing—wear and tear on our Nation's infrastructure. We are going to pass a bill, I hope, in a few days and send it over to the House. We hope we get it sent to the President on a bipartisan basis, and we want to build some more highways. We want to strengthen our bridges. Everyone within the sound of my voice knows we need to do that. It is a question of how to come up with the money, but the last thing we need to do is to authorize—not authorize, mandate—something that is going to cause more wear and tear and that 39 States don't want because of the wear and tear.

Also, estimates are that this forced mandate, if it comes from Washington, DC—if the Feinstein-Wicker amendment or something like it doesn't pass—will cost about \$1.2 billion to \$1.8 billion per year in additional funding because of the pavement damage. It just doesn't stand to reason that you can mandate this sort of additional truck length on the highways without more damage to the highways. It makes sense, and we have statistics to prove it.

Also, it is a matter of public safety. I will tell you that not every interstate in my State of Mississippi is exactly straight and narrow. We have some hills, and we have places where the curves are less desirable than I would like them to be. We are told that stopping distances are going to increase if we mandate this sort of thing on the 50 States. There are longer stopping distances for double 33's than the truck configuration we currently have on the roads in the United States of America. The double 33 trailers in some studies took 22 feet longer to stop than the current double 28's with normal operating brakes.

I have four grandchildren in Mississippi. I have two daughters with small children, two sons-in-law in Mississippi, and they are driving up and down these highways. I would just as soon they not have to compete on the roads, on those curves.

On Waterworks Curve in Jackson, MS, I would rather my three grandchildren not be in a van with a twin 33

trying to pass them. I just don't think it is safe for my children and my grandchildren, and the State governments in 39 States apparently agree. If they decide they disagree, they have that right.

Also, I think that Senator FEINSTEIN and I, with our amendment, are standing up for small business. Do you know who can afford a twin 33 tractor-trailer rig, double 33's? The big guys. The big companies. You know their names. They can afford to do this. And certainly one can understand why they would think it would be better for their business.

But I will tell you there is a reason why the Mississippi Trucking Association is opposed to this. They do not have the money to convert to a bunch of twin 33 double trailers. They would rather not do this. As a matter of fact, this Federal mandate—if Congress decides to do this, and I certainly hope we don't; I hope we don't think we are so smart we can mandate this on 50 States—is going to put some small truckers out of business. That is why the Mississippi Truckers Association passed a resolution. That is why they have contacted me.

And I will tell you this, Mr. President. While the American Trucking Association says they are for these twin 33's, the individual members of the ATA—the American Trucking Association—have come to me and said: Thank you, Senator WICKER, for standing up for our interests because we are small businesses and we can't afford to get in this competition. It will run us out of business to have to go out and make a capital investment.

I would also make an argument just in the name of federalism. There is a reason we have 50 States. And, you know, my Republican Party won an election in November and we won control of this body. One of the things we have said as Republicans is that we don't think all the wisdom resides here in Washington, DC. We don't like a lot of Federal mandates; we like States making decisions.

We made a bold statement last week that States should make their own decisions and school boards locally should make their own decisions with regard to education. I voted for that. I applaud that. It didn't go as far as many on this side would have perhaps wanted, but we made a strong statement that we wouldn't have a national education school board policy; we would move more of the decision-making back to the States. So why on Earth, a week and a half or 2 weeks later, would we make a decision here in Washington, DC, that we know more about how to take care of infrastructure; that we know more about truck lengths and more about safety for our children and grandchildren here in Washington, DC, than State legislatures do? I just don't think we will do that.

I urge my colleagues, while we have some time to debate, to get down to

the floor. Let's talk about this issue. We will be standing in quorum calls and recesses subject to the call of the Chair for perhaps most of this week-end. We have time to debate this issue now and for the few moments it takes Sunday or Monday or Tuesday or whenever we actually vote on this. We are entitled to a vote, Mr. President, on this germane amendment. And this is germane. It is not something extraneous, dealing with social issues or Planned Parenthood or any number of nongermane issues that I am sympathetic with. This is a transportation issue. It is germane to the bill. The Senate needs to work its will on this issue. It needs to go over to the House and they need to work their will.

I think that once we think about this, I would say to the Presiding Officer and to the rest of my colleagues, we will make the decision that we ought to leave this issue up to the States. There is a reason 39 States don't want to do this, in their considered opinion. We ought to respect that decision. We ought to do it in the name of federalism, in the name of the States having the right to do things a little differently in each State if they want to, in the name of safety, in the name of infrastructure, and in the name of fairness.

I thank Senator FEINSTEIN for joining with me on this bipartisan amendment, and I urge my colleagues, when the time comes—after the brief debate on the floor on this issue has occurred—to vote yes in favor of the Feinstein-Wicker amendment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to my friend.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

(The remarks of Mr. MERKLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1858 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I call up the Roberts amendment for consideration.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is on a motion to proceed. Amendments are not in order.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, when it is in order and I call up the Roberts amendment for consideration, I will thank my colleagues Senators ALEXANDER, BURR, CORNYN, COTTON, GARDNER, RISCH, SASSE, BOOZMAN, and TILLIS for joining me on this amendment.

Today we ask our fellow colleagues to stand with us to protect the U.S. economy from \$3.2 billion in retaliatory tariffs being applied to our exports to Canada and Mexico every year—every year.

A recent ruling from the World Trade Organization found, for the fourth and final time, that our Country of Origin Labeling Program for meat—or what the acronym says is COOL, to which it is often referred—that this labeling

program violates our trade agreements with our two closest trading partners.

This debate isn't about the merits of a particular labeling program or our opinions about how our beef or pork or chicken should be sold. No, this debate is about a simple fact, and facts are stubborn things.

Whether you support COOL or whether you oppose COOL, the fact is that retaliation is coming unless the Senate acts to stop this program that the WTO has found to be discriminatory.

Over the years, this body has attempted many times to craft a workable COOL Program for all stakeholders while still living up to our international trade obligations. Congress, through directives in the 2002 farm bill and the 2008 farm bill, required the establishment of COOL for meat. Through regulations issued in 2009 and revised in 2013, the Department of Agriculture made several attempts to implement a workable and WTO-compliant COOL Program. However, as I mentioned earlier, again and again the WTO ruled in favor of Canada and Mexico. On four occasions—four—our trade regulator ruled that the U.S. policy did not live up to our international trade obligations and disadvantaged our best trading partners, Canada and Mexico.

Some have suggested we should salvage this labeling program by once again making more changes. However, simply changing certain aspects of the program will not prevent the \$3.2 billion in retaliation from damaging our economy. Don't take my word for it. Here is a statement, issued just today, from the Canadian Government, which will determine whether retaliation on U.S. products will take effect in the near future: "The only acceptable outcome remains for the United States to repeal COOL or face \$3 billion in annual retaliation."

I have worked with many of my colleagues over the years and over the last few weeks to craft a solution that meets the needs of all stakeholders. However, after all of our work, it is clear that to protect our economy—to ensure Canada and Mexico drop their pursuit of retaliation on U.S. exports—we must first take up the House-passed bill repealing COOL, a bipartisan bill that received 300 votes in the House of Representatives.

The damages Canada and Mexico are seeking are immense—over \$3.2 billion in sanctions on U.S. products is probable if we do not repeal COOL—and these are not just agriculture products in the crosshairs. Products including beef, pork, cherries, and ethanol—repeat, and ethanol—wine, orange juice, jewelry, even mattresses, furniture, and parts for heating appliances are just some of the targets of Canadian retaliation. Mexico has yet to finalize their list, but we expect it to be just as damaging.

California alone has \$4 billion in exports to Canada at risk. Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New

Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin each have roughly \$1 billion in exports from their State at risk from the Canadian retaliation alone.

I remind my colleagues that again today Canada released a statement in response to legislation authored by others that reaffirmed their position: "The U.S. Senate must follow the lead of the House of Representatives and put forward legislation that repeals COOL once and for all."

Now, I must emphasize to my colleagues that retaliation is fast approaching and the responsibility sits squarely on our shoulders to avoid it. Regardless of what farm groups, the Department of Agriculture, or the USTR say or regardless of what some Members would like, Canada and Mexico—and only Canada and Mexico—have the ability to halt retaliation.

So this takes me back to the beginning of my statement: It doesn't matter if you support COOL or if you oppose COOL, you cannot ignore the fact that retaliation is imminent and that we must avoid it.

Repeal of mandatory COOL is necessary to protect the U.S. economy from damaging sanctions, and our amendment will accomplish just that.

I urge my colleagues to adopt the amendment.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the "Statement from Ministers Ritz and Fast on Senator STABENOW's Proposed Bill to amend U.S. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

(From Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada,
July 23, 2015]

STATEMENT FROM MINISTERS RITZ AND FAST ON SENATOR STABENOW'S PROPOSED BILL TO AMEND U.S. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING (COOL)

(By Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and International Trade Minister Ed Fast)

Senator Stabenow's (COOL) 2.0 fails to address Canada's concerns and would continue to undermine our integrated North American supply chains. By continuing the segregation of and discrimination against Canadian cattle and hogs, Senator Stabenow's measure will harm farmers, ranchers, packers, retailers and consumers on both sides of the border. This is contrary to successive World Trade Organization (WTO) decisions that have clearly ruled in Canada's favor.

The U.S. Senate must follow the lead of the House of Representatives and put forward legislation that repeals COOL once and for all.

The only acceptable outcome remains for the United States to repeal COOL or face \$3B in annual retaliation.

Canada will continue to stand up for the rights of our cattle and hog producers to ensure this harm is ended and to restore the value of our highly integrated North American livestock market.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the DRIVE Act. I commend Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member BOXER for their bipartisan work on this bill that passed out of the Environment and Public Works Committee with a unanimous vote.

A long-term highway solution such as the DRIVE Act will provide our States with the certainty they need to advance major road and bridge projects. Passing a 6-year bill would be a great achievement for this Congress, especially in the context of our recent history, and I am hopeful we will seize this opportunity.

Several years ago, as a member of the House Transportation Committee, I strongly supported the last long-term highway bill that helped support major roads in West Virginia and around the country.

The 2005 highway bill was extended 10 separate times—10 times—between 2009 and 2012. During that period, States were only assured Federal funding for a period of weeks or months, making lasting improvements to our highway infrastructure difficult, and it shows.

As we saw between 2009 and 2012, several short-term extensions resulted in fewer and more costly fixes. In 2012, we passed MAP-21 to reauthorize the highway program for 2 years. I served as a conferee on that legislation.

MAP-21 was a strong bipartisan achievement that included a number of important reforms to streamline project delivery and help States complete their projects more efficiently and economically, but ultimately MAP-21 was a 2-year bill.

Since MAP-21, we have had more of the same: short-term extension after short-term extension. The recent history shows how significant this opportunity we have is. We have before us a bipartisan, fiscally responsible bill that will provide the certainty our States need to improve the Nation's highway system for several years.

I am encouraged by the bipartisan vote we saw last night to move to debate, and I hope my colleagues will continue to work together to drive that DRIVE Act into law.

West Virginians rely heavily, as do most people around the country, on roads, bridges, and highways to fuel our economy, to access hard-to-reach places in our State, to get to and from work, and to transport goods and serv-

ices. West Virginians understand the need for a long-term highway bill. Nearly one-third of our State's major roads are currently in poor condition.

The Federal Highway Administration has listed 960 West Virginia bridges as structurally deficient. We have quite a few bridges in our State because of our beautiful mountains.

The DRIVE Act will increase funding for maintaining and repairing these bridges. The bill prioritizes maintenance of our major roads, helping to address the current state of disrepair on highways across this country.

This is a statistic of which, quite frankly, I was jarred by the number. Each West Virginia motorist pays an average of \$575 a year in extra maintenance costs due to the poor road conditions. The DRIVE Act will help our States address maintenance and repair, meaning safer and less costly trips for our drivers, but the biggest thing is the certainty that comes from a long-term highway bill. It is important for not only the maintenance aspect, but it is most important to advance new projects. Large highway projects are expensive multiyear endeavors.

States can't plan for the future based on funding commitments for a week or a month. Whether the issue is relieving congestion and improving access to rural communities to fuel economic development or moving freight across the country, the DRIVE Act will help the most important projects move forward.

In West Virginia, U.S. Route 35 in Putnam and Mason Counties is one of our most critical projects. It is an important freight link for the goods moving from the Southeast to the Midwest, but it has been two lanes for a very long time. It was one of the most dangerous roads that interstate truck traffic shared.

Thanks in part to the 2005 bill I talked about, the majority of Route 35 is now a four-lane highway, and our State efforts to complete the remaining 14 miles are well underway, but the DRIVE Act will aid efforts to get that project across the finish line. It will also help us build Corridor H for residents in Central and Eastern West Virginia, an important part of the Appalachian Development Highway System. When this road is completed, it will link counties in Central West Virginia with the Interstate 81 corridor, improving safety and providing economic development opportunities for our communities.

Whether it is Route 35, Corridor H, the King Coal Highway, Coal Fields Expressway or other high-priority projects across our State, States need that certainty that is going to come from a dedicated Federal investment to move forward. That is what a long-term highway bill does while creating jobs for our construction workers.

According to the Contractors Association of West Virginia, construction and employment in my State fell by 11.3 percent between November of 2013 and November of 2014. That is 1 year.

Passing a highway bill that supports investment in our roads and bridges will put these men and women back to work.

Reauthorizing our highway program for 6 years would be reason enough, in my opinion, to strongly support the DRIVE Act. I want to highlight another part of this bill that is important to my State. It reauthorizes the Appalachian Regional Commission through 2021. West Virginia is the only State whose boundaries fall entirely within the commission's boundaries.

Earlier this year, the commission marked its 50th anniversary of leading efforts to fight poverty and improve the quality of life in the Appalachian region. Over that period, poverty in the Appalachian region has been cut in half, and the percentage of residents over 25 with college degrees has nearly tripled, but there is much more work to be done.

The DRIVE Act authorizes a broadband deployment initiative through the ARC to help increase access to high-speed internet—a problem in rural America—in support of distance learning, telemedicine, and business development.

Reauthorizing the ARC and bringing broadband to small, economically distressed communities will help bring jobs to West Virginia. The ARC provides important support for health care, education, and infrastructure programs, and I am pleased the DRIVE Act will allow the commission to continue its efforts for the next 6 years.

Now is the time to move our transportation system forward and meet the needs of our growing population, ensure safety for travelers, and promote growth in areas that struggle economically. The Senate has the opportunity to make a real and positive difference for all Americans by passing the DRIVE Act.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this important legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, as we have been talking about fixing our Nation's infrastructure, I want to raise a concern I had with one of the potential ways in which we are talking about paying for it. That is by using funds out of what is called the Hardest Hit Fund.

Over the years, I have worked in my State of Ohio and around the country to help deal with this issue of abandoned homes. We are all concerned about communities that have blighted properties because they tend to be magnets for crime, for drugs, and for other illegal activity. It turns out that one of the best ways to increase home values in some of the blighted neighborhoods around our country and in my home State of Ohio is to actually take these abandoned homes, tear them down, and have that property be used for other purposes, whether it is new development, a community garden or

whether it is simply razing the property to ensure that homes in the neighborhood are not affected negatively by those home values going down.

There is a lot of information out there about this now because many States have become active in doing it, and it appears it is working. In other words, home values are increasing, sometimes dramatically, by taking down these blighted properties. I think, perhaps inadvertently, Members of this body who are looking at ways to pay for the highway trust fund extension decided that the Hardest Hit Fund was the place to look. There is no question there has been a GAO report about some aspects of this fund and how it has been used, where there might be need for reform, maybe significant reform, but this one area of dealing with blighted properties is one we need to be very careful with.

Main Streets across our country are looking to us right now in the U.S. Senate to ensure that we don't overreach, and trying to find funding for infrastructure, in effect, creates more problems in those neighborhoods. In my home State of Ohio, we have nearly 80,000 dangerous abandoned homes. One of the best things that you can do to address public safety in tumbling home values in those neighborhoods is to demolish these structures. By the way, some of the data that we have from cities in my home State of Ohio says they cost neighbors up to 80 percent of their value.

We have also seen that first responders sometimes are at risk when these homes are subject to arson and other crimes. Sadly, we lost a firefighter in one of these homes in Ohio because of arson.

I remember touring some of these abandoned homes in Toledo, OH, where I got to witness one of the homes being torn down. I have done the same thing in Warren, OH, and I have done the same thing in other communities around our State. I have done the same thing in Toledo with the mayor. As we were talking to neighbors, I asked the neighbor who was right next to one of the homes being torn down, how do you feel about this? She said what other neighbors have told me on other opportunities that I have had to go into these communities and talk about abandoned homes. She said: Well, it will be better because there is less blight and there is less crime. We have a concern because this abandoned home is being used by drug dealers. But she also said: You know, ROB, I live right next to this home. There are only a few feet that separated these two homes. She said: I have three kids at home. Every night when I went to bed, I was worried about what might happen, that an arsonist would light this home on fire, as has been done throughout the city of Toledo and other cities with abandoned homes, and that my kids would be at risk.

This is something that is working. I am concerned that if we do not take

this into account as we look at how to pay for this infrastructure bill, we will make the situation worse rather than better.

One way we are getting at this in my home State of Ohio and around the country is land banks. In some of the hardest hit States, manufacturing States like Ohio and Michigan got to work attacking this issue. The resources they need to demolish these properties in order to help struggling neighborhoods recover come in part from the Hardest Hit Fund.

In Ohio we now have 24 land banks. I think there are six more in formation. By the end of the year, we expect to have at least 30 county land banks in Ohio.

After visiting some of these neighborhoods that are impacted by these homes and walking the streets with local officials in 2013, I authored a bill called the Neighborhood Safety Act. It was a companion bill to a bipartisan House effort that was led by some Ohio Members of Congress, including DAVE JOYCE, MARCY KAPTUR, and MARCIA FUDGE. Our legislation called for the Hardest Hit Fund to be used for demolition purposes.

After we pushed for this and pushed aggressively, this important change was made. It provided nearly \$66 million to my State of Ohio to deal with these thousands of abandoned homes we talked about. I know the State of Michigan also received a significant part of the Hardest Hit Fund for these purposes, as did other States. Again, I am concerned about this potential payoff in the legislation that could take away some of these funds, which are critical for doing this important work. I have been in touch with the land banks in Ohio. I am talking to the Ohio Housing Finance Agency to determine what is the best path forward to protect these funds. We are working right now with the committee leadership to see if we can modify the language in the underlying bill. I know it is something that is a concern to Senator STABENOW because I spoke to her about it earlier today, as well as my colleague from Ohio Senator BROWN.

I don't know what we are going to do going forward. We may need to offer an amendment to change the language. I am hopeful we can have this be part of a managers' amendment. Again, dealing with these abandoned, blighted homes is a public safety concern. It is a huge concern for local officials, local officials in my home State whom I have talked to, been on the streets with, but also local officials across our country. We have to protect these funds for the communities that so desperately need them.

I wish to particularly thank a friend back home, Jim Rokakis, director of the Thriving Communities Initiative at the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. He has done excellent work highlighting issues in Ohio and has helped to bring people together.

I hope we will be able to resolve this issue in a managers' amendment, but if

not, I do intend to offer an amendment, and I hope that amendment can be supported on a bipartisan basis to ensure that we are not, perhaps inadvertently, taking away this tool that we are using every day to make our neighborhoods safer and to improve home values for the people we represent.

The final point I wish to make about the underlying legislation is that it also includes very important language that reforms our regulatory system—specifically, our permitting system. For years now, people have been talking about the fact that America is a place where it is hard to building something. In fact, it has gotten to the point that one international survey that is widely respected has said that America has fallen to No. 41 in the world in terms of the ease of doing business as it relates to green-lighting a project. Think of a commercial building, road or bridge being built or an energy project, whether it is solar, wind or oil and gas.

What we are finding out is that it is so hard to build something in America, that some of these funds are going somewhere else. Sometimes in foreign capitals, as we visit as congressional delegations, we see a lot of cranes and a lot of activity. Part of that is because these funds are not coming to this country because it takes so long to build something and to get the permits, and there is so much uncertainty and the capital is not patient enough. There is more legal liability here than in so many other countries. So being No. 41 in the world has led to our having fewer good-paying construction jobs here in this country.

As a result of this concern, over the last 3 years, I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to draft commonsense legislation to speed up the permitting process, while still ensuring that we go through a regulatory process that includes an environmental review and other reviews. This legislation streamlines the process and requires one Federal agency to be accountable, which is not the case now. It deals with some of the issues that we have now. For instance, you may have as many as 35 different Federal permits on an energy project just to get the project going.

It also helps with regard to legal liability. With regard to the statute of limitations, instead of having it run 6 years after the final environmental review, we limited that to 2 years, which is plenty of time to bring a lawsuit. Some have found that the 6-year statute of limitations makes it very difficult to find investors.

This is an important part of the legislation that we are dealing with as part of the highway trust fund. It is part of this infrastructure bill and will not only provide more funding for our highways and roads but will also ensure that we can move forward with more of these projects more quickly and use the money for efficiently.

This legislation has been supported broadly across the aisle. It was re-

ported out of our committee—the governmental affairs committee—earlier this year with a strong bipartisan vote. I believe the vote was 12 to 1. It is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and also by the AFL-CIO Building Trades Council. They feel strongly about it for all the right reasons. They want to bring back some jobs. A lot of construction jobs that were lost during the financial crisis have yet to come back. This will help.

I commend the authors of the underlying legislation for including my bill as part of the underlying bill. I sure hope it stays in the bill because it is the right thing to do for taxpayers, it is the right thing to do to get projects moving, and, of course, it is the right thing to do to create more jobs at a time when all of us continue to be disappointed by the recovery, which is one of the weakest recoveries we have ever seen in the history of our country.

I thank the Presiding Officer for allowing me to talk about an issue that is of concern; that is, that the Hardest Hit Fund does an excellent job in our communities with regard to abandoned homes. We have to be careful that we not pull the rug out from under these organizations that are doing a terrific job helping to make our communities safer and helping to increase home values.

Again, I wish to commend those who have included in this legislation our permitting bill. Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL from Missouri and I have worked on this for 3 years. It is good bipartisan legislation. It makes sense in order to get America back to work and building things again. It will help in terms of the highway funding by making sure that funding goes further, and it will also help in terms of all sorts of construction of other projects, such as energy projects, commercial buildings, and other infrastructure.

With that, I yield to my colleague. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

OVERTIME PAY

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Department of Labor's proposal to provide overtime pay to more Americans, a step that could affect as many as 90,000 middle-class workers in Minnesota and nearly 5 million around the country.

Right now, if someone makes more than \$450 a week, or about \$24,000 a year, there is a very good chance they don't qualify for overtime pay, and that is below the current poverty line for a family of four. The newly proposed regulations would raise that level to \$970 a week, or about \$50,000 annually. That means that a salaried worker earning less than that amount will be able to benefit from overtime pay regardless of the duties that he or she performs. This change would ben-

efit an enormous number of Americans whose wages have remained virtually unchanged while the cost of education, childcare, and retirement have risen steadily over the past decade.

Last month, we saw the 64th straight month of private sector job growth since the Great Depression. Our economy overall is getting stronger, but too much of that prosperity is going to people at the top. Middle-class families and those aspiring to be in the middle class simply are not reaping the benefits. In fact, America's wealth gap between middle-income and upper-income families is at its highest level—the gap—since 1983. The gap between the highest and lowest earners is at its greatest since before the Great Depression. This kind of inequality is not just bad for those workers. It is bad for our economy as a whole, which is strongest when we have a thriving middle class.

Overtime protections were first passed as part of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 in the midst of the Great Depression, when the economy was far worse off than it is now. It was passed as a way to protect workers from abusive employers and lay the groundwork to rebuild the middle class. While overtime protections have been a staple of the American economy, they no longer reach many of the workers they were intended to help.

Just look at the trends. In 1975, overtime covered 62 percent of full-time salaried workers, including a majority of people with college degrees. Today only 8 percent of workers are eligible for overtime, which is an especially alarming statistic since hourly wages for the average worker have remained flat in real dollars since 1979. That is why in January of this year I joined several of my colleagues in pushing President Obama to update these outdated overtime rules. We asked the President to allow more working people to qualify for overtime and to index those earnings, that threshold, to keep up with inflation so that future generations of American workers could reap the benefits of their hard work. I am glad the administration agreed. These proposed rules will help put more money in the pockets of those who work longer hours or provide incentive to employers to hire more workers or increase the hours of part-time workers and help strengthen the economy. These rules will allow workers to spend their new-found earnings and spur further economic growth. They will help grow our shrinking middle class, which is the backbone of our economy, and help create a pathway for those who want to become a part of the middle class. It is vital that we support this proposal to guarantee overtime pay to millions of more Americans.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. HOEVEN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1844 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. HOEVEN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

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

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, as I watch this great deliberative body move toward a transportation bill, I sometimes feel as though I am watching an impending train wreck or a car crash because on the issue of safety this bill reflects a tragic, unfortunate, unforgivable missed opportunity. If we authorize this transportation measure, which is vitally important to the future of our Nation and will help drive economic growth and create jobs, we will miss the opportunity to make our roads and rails safer, more reliable, and more resilient for our economy and quality of life. We are missing an opportunity to, in effect, save lives.

Anyone who has opened the morning newspaper and read about a derailment—whether in Bridgeport, Rikers Island, the Bronx, NY, or Philadelphia—causing injuries, deaths, loss of both life and property, can ask, understandably, why can't they do something? Anybody who discovers a used car bought by a friend or a relative or oneself rife with recalls and the need for repairs can justifiably ask, why can't they do something? Anybody who has had a near miss on the highway with an 80,000-pound truck going 75 miles an hour because there is a tired truckdriver under pressure from an owner or because there are two 33-length rigs can justifiably ask, why haven't they done something? The answer is because the Senate is missing an opportunity now, this year, on this bill.

I spend a lot of time driving Connecticut's roads and seeing firsthand how all of these vital forms of transportation—railroad, bridges, ports, and airports—are in need of investment.

The latest example and evidence is from a report released today—it is called the "TRIP report"—in New Haven finding that 45 percent of roads there are in poor condition and that the cost to drivers is \$707 a year in re-

pairs. That is real money. The roads are in very bad condition—45 percent of them—in the New Haven area alone. And the "TRIP report" ought to be a powerful reminder of the need for robust and enduring investment.

I wrote to the writers and drafters of the bill before us asking for a good bill that makes the kind of investment we need to respond to the needs that are reflected in the "TRIP report," which is in the range of billions of dollars a year, but this measure provides to Connecticut only about \$500 million a year—a pittance compared to what the need is in Connecticut.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration, keeping roads and rail reliable and safe means investment. Creating jobs means investment. Driving the economy forward means investment. All of those goals can be served by a robust and adequate investment.

I urged that the bill cover the full 6 years. Instead, this bill really is a mirage of what is necessary. The bill before us fails to provide a long-term and robust plan to meet the priorities for our Nation's transportation infrastructure. Major construction projects, such as building the I-84/Route 8 highway interchange in Waterbury, known as the Mixmaster, and replacing the Aetna Viaduct portions of I-84 in Hartford, will take years to complete. This bill provides only the illusion of a long-term authorization, backed only by 3 years of dedicated funding for highways and no—let me repeat—no dedicated funding for critical infrastructure investment in our Nation's commuter railroads.

When the American people discover what is in this bill, they are going to again say: Why can't they do something? Why can't they do something better than this train wreck and car collision of a bill?

I voted against the motion to proceed to this bill because of its failure to provide a path forward and this bill's failure to provide a reliable funding source for the commuter rail systems millions of Americans depend on every day and its failure to address our country's ongoing crisis in transportation safety.

We have seen the evidence of safety failure in a variety of tragic instances—in Philadelphia, in Westchester County, where a collision at a grade crossing killed six people; a derailment in the Bronx that killed four; a train on the wrong track that struck and killed a worker in West Haven; and, of course, the derailment in Bridgeport that injured more than 70 people.

Positive train control would help prevent these kinds of tragedies. It is a technology similar to GPS—not much more complicated—that monitors track conditions and speeds and helps trains slow or stop before there is a collision or derailment. It is not a new or novel or original, untested technology; it has been around for years.

This bill fails to bring our railroads into the latest 20th-century technology, not to mention the 21st-century technology that positive train control offers.

The Northeast Corridor is in urgent need of at least \$570 million per year to enable a decent and adequate state of repair, to give railroads a realistic chance of implementing lifesaving positive train control technology, and to improve safety at rail grade crossings. That is money which can't be created by a mirage or an illusion in a bill like this one. The national infrastructure safety and investment grants program was designed to provide this level of support. If Congress were to dedicate the necessary funding from the highway trust fund, it could be done, but Congress is ignoring this fundamental need.

On our roads, American bus and truck drivers perform an essential service and they work hard at it, but their industry also has well-documented safety issues. Unfortunately, this legislation creates additional hurdles for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to promulgate rules and to address safety issues. Rather than making the world safer, it actually enables more danger.

The bill before us allows 18-year-olds to sit behind the wheel of an 80,000-pound truck going 75 miles an hour—with no requirement to get rest—to drive 75 miles an hour not only within the State but across State lines.

The bill allows giant twin 33's—new to our roads—to be driven across State lines, putting drivers at risk and further degrading our highway system.

The bill eviscerates rules on how much rest truckdrivers must take. That rest is essential to safety.

I sought to strike and modify these damaging provisions in committee, and I urged my colleagues to support essential safety reforms, but unfortunately those calls went unheeded.

Over the last 2 years, the commerce committee has had a tragic front-row seat—a unique insight into the tragedies that pile up when safety is ignored. Our national safety regulators all too commonly look the other way when auto companies, for example, conceal information to protect profits over human life.

I appreciate the work of Senator BOXER, who has stripped the most offensive provisions out of the title governing the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. That title no longer limits grants for the prevention of drunk driving, for example. Unfortunately, it still contains unacceptable loopholes.

Due to the GM ignition coverup and the Takata airbag crisis, there are currently an unprecedented 64 million cars on the road today that are under safety recall. Let me repeat that number. There are 64 million cars on the road today that are under safety recall.

That is 25 percent of the total 250 million cars in America. To say this number is unprecedented fails to do it justice.

Along with a number of my colleagues, particularly Senator MARKEY, I advocated numerous policy changes to ensure accountability for these problems and make them less likely in the future—not just to punish but to protect. I would like to focus on two that are particularly urgent.

First, many of the cars that have been recalled are 10 or more years old and in the hands of their second or third owners. There needs to be a provision that says to these car dealers that when a car is in a recall, they have an obligation to notify a new owner and, in fact, to repair the car.

Second, as we learned in the case of GM, Federal prosecutors simply lack legal tools to file criminal charges against companies for knowingly concealing information about defects that can kill. Deliberate coverup and concealment of deadly defects should be punishable criminally, as it is in other industries where the stakes are similar. We know that employees at GM were aware of dangerous safety defects but chose to remain silent or, in fact, mislead authorities, leading to hundreds of injuries and deaths.

This measure and the DRIVE Act do nothing to hold manufacturers or their corporate officers criminally responsible when they knowingly fail to disclose those risks. Even after the defects are discovered, this bill lacks the teeth to ensure that wrongdoing is not repeated. Their civil penalty authority for safety violations is currently capped at \$35 million. The DRIVE Act leaves these fines at just a pittance compared to the revenue of GM—less than the cost of doing business. Safety fines need to be meaningful rather than a pittance, less than the cost of doing business. Congress must remove this cap and ensure that safety penalties provide a meaningful deterrent to wrongdoing. Even at \$70 million, it is a pittance compared to GM, which made \$156 billion in 2014.

Americans deserve better than another 6 years of crashes, bridge collapses, accidents that are preventable, and they need protection to stop it. I hope my colleagues will join me to implement reforms now and take strong steps to build and maintain a transportation system worthy of the greatest, strongest country in the history of the world.

For our economy, we can create jobs. For our quality of life, we can ensure quality and convenience. For our safety, we can prevent tragedy. We can do better with a transportation system that keeps people safe.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a very important topic for our country, the future of our kids, and the future of our kids' kids.

This morning I was in a Foreign Relations hearing about Iran. It is pretty obvious that the administration has decided once again that our democratic values and procedures are just too high of a hurdle to clear. Instead of keeping its promise to the American people and following the pledge it made to Congress just a few months ago to give everyone time to review the terms of this deal, the administration has instead undercut all of us again. This administration has effectively ignored 98 Senators—myself included—and 400 Representatives who voted for the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act earlier this year. By advancing this vote at the U.N. Security Council, this administration has violated the very balance of power between our three branches of government.

I am outraged that this administration continues to circumvent Congress at every turn, from regulations, to mandates, to foreign policy. This is an absolute failure of the administration to do what is best for the American people, our security, and indeed the security of the world.

The precept for this deal with Iran simply doesn't make sense. This deal started off by ceding the right to enrich to Iran immediately, reversing decades of U.S. nonproliferation policy. In fact, Secretary Kerry said in 2013 that "we do not recognize the right to enrich."

This deal reverses six United Nations Security Council resolutions and turns a pariah proliferator into a legitimate nuclear state.

This agreement allows Iran to leapfrog over the 18 countries who have peaceful nuclear programs but no enrichment and to be treated like countries like Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Netherlands, and Japan who have peaceful energy programs and domestic enrichment but who do not have a nuclear weapon. These five nations are upstanding members of the international community.

This deal takes Iran—the largest state sponsor of terrorism and a violator of human rights as well as an international pariah—and treats Iran's nuclear program like Japan's.

Secretary Kerry said at a hearing in the Foreign Relations Committee in March that "our negotiation is calculated to make sure that [Iran] can never have a nuclear weapon." But President Obama has said that "in year

13, 14, or 15 . . . the breakout times would have shrunk down to almost zero."

So this deal will not protect Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state; it just delays it. As I have said all along, I cannot support any deal that allows Iran to become a nuclear weapons state—not now, not in 10 years, not ever.

What is more, this deal provides Iran with billions of dollars of sanctions relief upfront, before the IAEA completes its assessment on whether Iran's nuclear program is indeed peaceful. It took the IAEA 19 years to make this determination for South Africa's program. And this deal starts lifting United Nations and European Union sanctions this year, the arms embargo in 5 years, and the ballistic missile ban in 8 short years. This deal will provide Iran with a windfall of sanctions relief of up to over \$100 billion—funds that President Obama's National Security Advisor Susan Rice just recently conceded will go to terrorism, the Iranian military, the Houthis, and Assad.

President Obama said that "this deal is not built on trust, it is built on verification." But this deal doesn't require "anytime, anywhere" inspections of all nuclear and military sites. Instead, it empowers Iran to create lengthy delays when IAEA inspectors request access to suspicious nuclear sites that are indeed not declared by Iran. From what I understand, the IAEA will have two teams traveling a country twice the size of Texas. And let's not forget that Iran developed the Fordow facility and it operated for years despite having IAEA teams on the ground.

And if we do find Iran to be in violation of this deal, our enforcement mechanism has no teeth. Snapback sanctions in fact are a fantasy. Paragraph 37 of the Iran deal states that Iran will cease performing all of its commitments to the deal in the event of a full or partial snapback. Iran will walk away if we try to hold it to the very deal it just signed off on.

With this all-or-nothing nature of the snapback, will anyone try to punish Iran's cheating? History tells us that when Iran cheats, it does so incrementally, in small steps, so no single action in and of itself can be punished, but when you look at it over time, their cheating is egregious.

Will any nation be willing to stake sinking the entire deal over minor cheating? Even if sanctions are indeed snapped back, Iran's sanctions relief is front-loaded. They will be able to so quickly pad their economy to make themselves more resistant to future sanctions. Most dangerously, this deal is predicated on the idea that the regime will change its dangerous behavior, when we have only seen proof that we will see more of the same—sponsorship of rogue regimes and terrorism worldwide.

So I am curious, given what we know now about this deal, how the United States not only voted for this deal at

the United Nations Security Council but actually sponsored the resolution. Secretary Kerry claims that should Congress disapprove of this deal, we would be in noncompliance with all of the other countries in the world. He claims that there will be no nation standing with us on our sanctions or opposition to Iran.

Well, I say we let the nations of the world decide for themselves. Let's give the world the option. We have stood alone before. Do you want to do business with Iran or the United States? We have stood alone many times in history when it meant doing the right thing.

The American people and the fine people of Georgia who are calling and writing into my office every day are uncomfortable with this nuclear deal for Iran, and they are uncomfortable with our future under its provisions. So I say to this administration that you cannot circumvent the American people with this nuclear deal. Congress will have its say. We worked hard for this 60-day review period and I will do my part to muster the 67 votes required to disapprove a deal that leaves Iran as a nuclear threshold state in a little more than a decade.

This 60-day oversight period is the result of a bipartisan effort in the House and Senate, protecting the balance of the three branches of government. Now we must act together to protect our country and our world from a very bad actor like Iran from ever becoming a nuclear weapons state.

Mr. President, I rise also in the time remaining to speak very briefly of a current issue that we are going to vote on, possibly this weekend; that is, the highway trust fund. Georgia sent me to Washington to help solve our fiscal crisis, not make it worse. As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, I am working every day to find smarter ways to prioritize our spending. That way we can support critical functions of the Federal Government such as funding our National Highway System.

Make no mistake—I support funding infrastructure, but we must do it responsibly. Transportation is a top priority as it supports a robust economy and is one of the responsibilities the Federal Government is charged with in executing under the Constitution. As we continue to debate the highway bill in the Senate, I am committed to finding the right funding and enough funding for our critical infrastructure needs.

As proposed, the highway bill authorizes spending for the next 6 years yet only funds these programs for the next 3 years. Passing responsibility over to the next Congress to find additional funding mechanisms for the remaining 3 years is unacceptable. It is what has gotten us in this debt crisis in the first place. Some of my colleagues have suggested this is simply the way the Senate has acted in the past. Yes, I got that. Again, it is what got us here. That may be true, but it does not make

it right. I was not sent to Washington to accept this status quo.

A serious long-term solution needs to be fully funded, not filled with half-empty promises that cannot be kept or could add to our national debt. I am working to find a responsible way forward in order to provide Georgia and other States with more certainty through a longer term solution, instead of settling for just another short-term fix. Today, I am introducing an amendment to simply match the authorization period with the available funding. That sounds basic; it sounds simple. It is what I have to do at home in my home budget. It is what most Americans have to do. If they don't have the money, they don't spend it. This amendment ensures that Congress is not authorizing spending programs beyond a point where there is no money to pay for them in the future.

I urge my colleagues to join me in breaking Washington of its chronic overspending problem. I urge my colleagues to support a fiscally responsible highway bill that matches the length of the authorization with the funding mechanism. That way we can continue to fund our critical infrastructure projects without compromising our conservative budget principles.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Senate has an opportunity to pass a multiyear transportation bill that ensures critical transportation projects move forward without disruption. As part of this bipartisanship bill, the DRIVE Act, we also have an opportunity to pass necessary policy changes that enhance safety and make our transportation system work better.

Part of the DRIVE Act includes important work on transportation policy we have undertaken at the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. We will lose an opportunity to pass bipartisan reforms if we do not approve this critical legislation.

The last time we passed a multiyear transportation bill into law was 2012. However, since 2009, we have passed 33 short-term extensions to avoid a funding gap that would stop much-needed transportation projects. Highway and transportation infrastructure projects—and in many urban areas, public transit projects—are important to our constituents and our Nation's economy.

If we continue to do short-term extensions—again 33, literally 33 short-term extensions since 2009—that is a terrible way to run a highway program. It does not allow State departments of transportation to plan. It does not allow those who are involved in the construction, the contractors who build our roads and bridges, an opportunity to plan. It creates all kinds of uncertainty out there.

We need the certainty that comes with a long-term highway program instead of having these 33 short-term extensions. So this is a unique opportunity that we have to actually put in place policies that would guide us at least for the next 3 years and hopefully beyond. Our transportation system is one of our government's visible assets. Our constituents who sent us here notice when there is a problem with it.

The Federal infrastructure investment that Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER have taken the lead on in the Environment and Public Works Committee and the transit projects for which the banking committee is responsible are not the only critical parts of our transportation system. There are policy decisions and advanced safety initiatives. We have rules governing how and when and where we build critical projects, as well as oversight of various regulations at the U.S. Department of Transportation regarding trucking, freight rail, passenger rail, and automobile safety requirements.

These areas are the exclusive jurisdiction of the Senate commerce committee. I have the honor of chairing the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. I was pleased to see my friend from Florida, Senator NELSON, who is the ranking member of our committee, return last night following his surgery last week to help advance consideration of the DRIVE Act.

Let's talk about some of the policies that I have worked on with colleagues on both sides of the aisle that will not become law if we fail to move forward with this bill. Keep in mind that Senators WICKER and BOOKER are the authors of the rail safety bill that the commerce committee passed by voice vote last month, and their bill is included in this legislation.

Let's also recognize that commuter rail systems, including New Jersey Transit and Virginia Railway Express, have stated that they will not meet Federal deadlines for implementing positive train control technology. This legislation currently before the Senate would authorize grants and prioritize loan applications to help commuter railroads deploy this new technology to help address safety issues and to get positive train control up and running as soon as possible.

The bill also includes numerous additional rail safety requirements, including the implementation of necessary automatic train control modifications and crew communication improvements, to improve operations while

positive train control is being implemented.

The National Transportation Safety Board recommended requiring inward-facing cameras in all passenger railroads to create more accountability. This bill requires all passenger railroads to install such equipment in their locomotives. In fact, I have a letter here from the National Transportation Safety Board, in which Chairman Christopher Hart says:

I applaud the recent passage of the passenger rail safety bill. I was pleased to see the inclusion of our recommendations regarding inward and outward audio and image recorders.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the NTSB.

That is from the National Transportation Safety Board Chairman, Mr. Christopher Hart. So having these necessary improvements will make our passenger rail systems much safer as they travel across the country.

The bill also streamlines the permitting process for improvements to existing railroad track and infrastructure and improves multimodal planning and permitting. The Secretary of Transportation will have new authority to speed up projects and to reduce paperwork burdens. Outside of improving rail safety, we include a proposal offered as an amendment during committee markup by Senator MCCASKILL to ban rental car companies from renting vehicles needing recall repair work.

We also include several provisions to increase consumer awareness of recalls, increased corporate responsibility, and improved highway safety efforts in all the States. Following a harsh inspector general report criticizing the Federal Government's auto safety regulator, this bill requires the full implementation of reforms outlined in that report. Once these reforms are implemented, the agency's funding authorization will substantially increase to meet the GROW AMERICA requests for vehicle safety efforts. These are important safety provisions in this bill. They make our roads and our transportation system safer, and they deserve our support.

At the committee level, some provisions of our title were the subject of constructive discussions that helped us improve this bill before it made its way to the floor. Here are a few things we did to broaden support for this proposal after our committee passed the bill last week.

Senator MANCHIN raised concerns about a provision I authored that requires additional testing for a new train braking requirement known as ECP that will be required under law by 2021 and 2023. I worked with Senator MANCHIN. We came to an agreement that if new real-world tests show that the requirement isn't effective, it cannot proceed. If it is effective, there will be no delay in its implementation, and there will be no need for new rule-making.

We worked with Mothers Against Drunk Driving on another important

issue to combat drunk driving. When we heard they had concerns with our 24/7 sobriety program grant language, we worked with them to address those concerns and to assure that the dedicated grant program with ignition interlock laws continues.

A pilot program our bill proposed that would allow licensed truckdrivers between the ages of 18 to 21 to cross short distances outside the borders of their home State now requires not only the approval of participating States but also the approval of the Secretary of Transportation. At the Commerce Committee we have worked on a bipartisan basis to change, drop or add provisions since we marked up the bill to earn the support of colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

There are still some differences. I expect amendments where this body will have the opportunity to decide important issues that we have debated throughout the committee process. One such issue, which I heard a variety of opinions about, concerns the current \$35 million cap on fines that the Department of Transportation can assess on manufacturers for auto safety violations. This bill would double the cap to \$70 million, provided that the Department first finishes a still undone rule-making process on penalty assessment factors that was required in our last highway bill.

I have heard arguments that this cap on fines for auto safety failure should be raised more or even set at an unlimited amount, but we are doubling this cap to \$70 million and conditioning an additional increased authorization for vehicle safety on implementing needed reforms.

This bill enhances safety. If we do not pass this bill, auto safety regulators don't get more funding, as called for by Secretary Foxx and various safety groups following the record 64 million auto safety recalls we have witnessed over the past 2 years. Penalties for auto safety violations will not go up if this bill doesn't pass, commuter railroads don't get new assistance to implement positive train control or the other critically important safety improvements that the NTSB, Amtrak, the FRA, and others have called for. None of that happens if this bill doesn't pass. Rental car companies don't face a Federal ban on renting vehicles that are subject to open recalls if this bill doesn't pass.

Not passing the safety reforms in the DRIVE Act would be an incredible missed opportunity for addressing a host of key safety improvements. Some in this building believe it would be easier if we just passed another short-term extension. They are right. It would be much easier, but keeping highway and related transportation infrastructure projects funded for a few more months doesn't address safety and regulatory issues that we cannot afford to keep ignoring.

Five months from now, if tax reform leaves us with new options, we can al-

ways decide to infuse additional funding into the bill before the Senate, but delaying action on transportation for 5 months could also compound our difficulties. Remember, there have already been 33 short-term extensions passed by Congress since 2009.

A silent part of every argument for a short-term extension is let's not address safety and other critical transportation needs. The right decision for the American people is to seize the opportunity to pass a bipartisan, multiyear transportation bill without delay.

I wish to share with you some of the letters of support we have received from various organizations that have looked at the body of work that is included in these particular provisions that I have mentioned.

The Governors Highway Safety Association says:

GHSA congratulates the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee on releasing S. 1732. This six-year reauthorization bill will provide needed stability and consistency for state highway safety agencies to reduce the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities on America's roads.

This is from the American Public Transportation Association. It says:

On behalf of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), our 1,500 member agencies, and the millions of Americans that depend on public transportation, I write to commend the Committee's hard work to advance comprehensive rail legislation that attempts to address safety, funding needs, Amtrak enhancements, improved project delivery, and other important rail policy issues.

We fully support the inclusion of a rail title within any broader surface transportation authorization package considered in the Senate.

That was from the president and CEO of the American Public Transportation Association.

The National Association of Railroad Passengers states that they are writing "to endorse the inclusion of the Railroad Reform, Enhancement, and Efficiency Act (S. 1626) into the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015 (S. 1732).

"The move to include passenger rail authorizing language in a broader highway and transit bill is an important step in recognizing the critical role intercity trains play in a national transportation system."

This letter is from the States for Passenger Rail Coalition:

On behalf of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc., (SPRC) I write in support of the actions taken by the Commerce Committee to introduce sections of the highway bill. I am particularly pleased that the Railroad Reform, Enhancement, and Efficiency Act (R2E2)—as approved by the Commerce Committee—was included as a title of the bill.

These are just a few of the examples of letters we have received. The final one I will mention is from Transportation for America, and there again they say they appreciate the fact that we are authorizing "the federal passenger rail program with the transportation safety and freight provisions

under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Committee through 2021,” and that “this proposal moves the federal transportation program in the right direction in addressing the nation’s freight needs.”

The point I wish to make is there have been some of our colleagues on the floor who have been finding fault with various provisions in the bill, and obviously there are going to be a lot of people who aren’t going to support this in the end anyway, but we ought to at least be talking about the facts. We ought to be talking about what is actually in the bill, and we ought to be talking about the important reforms that were made in this legislation that addressed safety issues, safety on the highway, safety on our rail system, improvements and reforms in our passenger rail systems, and the commuter railroads we have traveling across this country. There are a number of needed safety improvements and reforms that will be lost if we fail to act.

The letters I have mentioned are just a few examples of the organizations that rely upon those forms of transportation, that recognize this is an opportunity we should not miss.

I hope we will take advantage of the opportunity and not do another short-term extension, which would be the 34th now since 2009, and not put in place the types of changes, reforms, and improvements that are needed in our transportation system across this country. If we fail to act now—the window that people think we have now for a short-term extension—we will be looking at this sometime later this year, and we will be right back where we are right now.

We shouldn’t miss this opportunity. We should take advantage of it and try, and as best we can as we move this across the Senate floor and debate some of these issues—if there are ideas about improving it, making it better, making it stronger, I think that is what this debate is all about. But I want to make sure that as we talk about these issues we are accurately characterizing and reflecting what is actually in the bill and all the work that has been done on both sides of the aisle by both Democrats and Republicans and Members who are interested in these issues.

There are a number of committees that have jurisdiction over transportation issues. As I mentioned, the Commerce Committee is just one. The Environment and Public Works Committee has had the lead on writing the bill. The Finance Committee, on which I also serve, is responsible for—at least largely responsible for—trying to come up with the pay-fors the way that we are going to fund this, and the banking committee deals with many of the transit provisions of the bill.

So there are multiple jurisdictional issues involved here. All the committees have been active. All the Members on those committees have been active.

I can certainly say that on our committee, the commerce committee, we had great participation from both Republicans and Democrats on the committee. We had a lot of good input, which didn’t end when we reported the bill out of the committee but continued on through the weekend and into this week. So we continue to look at ways we can make this bill stronger.

But I have to say, all the things that are included in here, all the things I mentioned along with the components and features of this bill that have been worked on by other committees, are important changes. Probably, most important of all, is that we get something that puts in place a multiyear bill that creates the kinds of conditions that are conducive to jobs and to economic growth. We all know how important transportation infrastructure is to our economy.

I come from a part of the country where we rely heavily—we drive long distances, we have a lot of geography that we have to cover. Our economy, because we are agriculturally based, relies very heavily upon getting our products to the marketplace. So we have to have good roads and bridges, we have to have a railroad system that works, and we believe that many of the things that are done in this bill contribute to, enhance, make stronger, better, and more efficient our transportation system. That is good for jobs, that is good for the economy in this country, and that is why it is so important that we move forward.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, after last night’s cloture vote, we are one step closer to providing a long-term solution for the shortfalls in the highway trust fund. Soon we will begin debate on legislation that will provide more clarity and certainty to our States and to highway builders and workers throughout the country.

Earlier this week, I was pleased to learn that our distinguished majority leader and the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee were able to reach a bipartisan agreement to authorize and fund a long-term highway extension. I want to commend both of them and everyone who was involved in putting this bill together for their hard work and willingness to put partisanship aside in order to help the American people.

Now the rest of us need to follow their example. I want to express my support for this bipartisan highway bill and urge all of my Senate colleagues to do the same.

The legislation that we will soon be debating would authorize expenditures from the highway trust fund for 6 years and provide 3 years of funding. It would do so without adding a dime to the deficit and without raising taxes.

Over the last few months, we have all heard from the naysayers who claimed that such a feat was impossible, that there was no path forward to provide long-term highway funding without a massive tax increase. I am pleased to see our colleagues have provided us with such a path. All we have to do is be willing to walk down that path.

This bipartisan bill provides us with a historic opportunity when it comes to highway funding. It would provide the longest extension of highway funding we have seen in over a decade.

I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—including some who will likely come out against this bill—like to point to the 2012 MAP-21 legislation as a paragon for how Congress should consider and pass a long-term highway bill. Of course, MAP-21 extended highway funding for only 2 years. This legislation we will be debating this week will go for a significantly longer period of time.

In short, passage of this bill would be a significant victory for good government, and, of course, it would provide a great example of what is possible when Members of both parties work together.

Of course, we have seen a number of these types of examples in the Senate this year. For example, earlier this year we passed legislation to permanently repeal and replace the Medicare sustainable growth rate system, a problem that had plagued Congress and our health care system for years. Shortly thereafter, we passed a bipartisan bill to combat human trafficking. And, of course, after that, Members from both parties in both Chambers came together to renew trade promotion authority and update our trade laws for the 21st century.

The Senate is working again, and I don’t think it is going to stop any time soon. I think the highway bill will be the next item we add to the long list of bipartisan victories we have achieved in the Senate under the current leadership. We just need to keep moving this bill forward.

Of course, this bill isn’t perfect either. Anyone who is desperate to find a reason to vote against this legislation could likely scour through the text and find some frivolous reason.

The pay-fors in the bill—at least as far as I am concerned—don’t all represent ideal policy choices. But we shouldn’t hold a good bill hostage while we search for perfection. Indeed, as I said a number of times here on the floor in recent months, I have been here in the Senate for 39 years, and in that time I don’t remember voting on very many bills I thought were perfect.

This is a good bill. It is not meant to be a partisan wish list or a political messaging vehicle. It provides a serious

and workable solution to a legitimate problem, and it was designed to get support from Members of both parties.

Once again, I want to commend my colleagues for getting us this close to a solution on highways.

As we all know, the House has taken a different path with regard to highway funding. They have sent over a 6-month patch with the intention of using that time to work on a solution that would both fix problems in our Tax Code and provide for long-term highway funding.

The idea of linking highways to tax reform has a lot of support here in Washington. Like I said, that is the path the House has opted to go down, and I know leaders in the Obama administration have a similar vision.

I want to make one thing clear. I support tax reform. I have been and will continue to be the most outspoken Member of the Senate in favor of robust, bipartisan tax reform. I agree with many of my colleagues that linking that effort to the highway funding could make a lot of sense.

Luckily, the Senate's highway bill will allow us to continue to pursue that path. Keep in mind, that under this bill, we will have 3 years of additional authorized highway expenditures to pay for when all is said and done. This means that whenever we can agree on a tax reform package, whether it is 6 months from now or later, it will still be possible—and likely just as sensible—to tie the two efforts together.

My colleagues also need to keep in mind that while this legislation addresses the immediate need for highway funding, the fundamental issues that fuel the need for tax reform will remain in place. We will still face an increasing number of corporate incursions and foreign takeovers. Our tax rates will still be too high, and our Tax Code will still be altogether too complicated and burdensome.

In other words, if Congress passes this bipartisan, long-term highway bill, we will still be under enormous pressure to fix our Nation's broken Tax Code and to provide relief to struggling job creators and taxpayers throughout the country. No one should question that.

Once again, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bipartisan highway package. It provides a realistic path forward to a solution that all of us want to see. Traditionally, Members of both parties have been able to come together to deal with our Nation's infrastructure. For the sake of our citizens who need better roads and highways; for our builders, engineers, and job creators, who want to grow and expand; and for our workers who need good jobs, I hope we can do so with this important legislation.

Now, having said that and having found good in what both the House and Senate are trying to do, I think it is important to point out that delaying this for 6 months is not going to work. I can see the same roadblocks thrown up every step of the way, and then you

get to the end of that particular time and the leverage is going to be with those who want to stall this fight to begin with.

So I am concerned about doing that, especially when we have what really is a very good highway bill here in the Senate and could solve at least these problems for a while, and we can still work on tax reform in the process.

I have no illusions. I have been around here for a long time, and I know how difficult tax reform is going to be. I also know it takes Presidential leadership, which I hope will be there when the time comes. But we have no guarantee it is going to be there.

I can remember many months ago that I said to the President: If you want tax reform, send us a well-thought-out bill, and we will see what we can do to put it through. I am still waiting, and I can say that to put all our apples in that particular basket may not be the smartest thing we can do, especially since we are going to be in an election year next year. That could make it very, very difficult by the end of this year to really do what we all know we should do.

This bill answers that problem. It gets rid of one very important big problem, and that is our highway funding. It is no secret that we on the Finance Committee provided—and they didn't think we could do this—really around \$82 billion, which we found in the code. We did not expect all \$82 billion to be used, but they were there, and it would have given us approximately a 6-year highway bill.

That is not going to happen now. But to have a 3-year highway bill, with some of the things we were able to come up with—even though some are difficult and controversial—is nothing short of a miracle. So I think we have to get this done. We need to show the House that the Senate is moving ahead, and we also need to cooperate with our friends in the House when it comes to tax reform.

I hope we can bring both Houses together and do tax reform before the end of the year. It would be wonderful if we could. I don't have any illusions about it, however. But I think we ought to do what we should do, what we have to do, and what needs to be done at this particular time.

With that, Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his request?

Mr. HATCH. I will be happy to withhold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of my friend from Utah. Before Senator HATCH leaves the floor, I just want to say that we have worked very hard to put this bill together. It has been difficult. If I were writing it, I would have written it differently. If the Senator from Utah were writing it alone, he would have written it differently. But we have worked to-

gether long enough to know that we have to meet each other halfway.

Mr. HATCH. Will the Senator yield?

Mrs. BOXER. Of course.

Mr. HATCH. I want to thank her.

Mrs. BOXER. Oh, that is nice. Thank you.

Mr. HATCH. This has not been an easy thing to do, and she has taken some unnecessary and unjust criticism for trying to do the art of the doable here in the Senate.

I just want to tell her it has been a privilege to work with her, and I want to make sure that together—and with the help of others—we get this bill through for the benefit of this country and for the benefit of our highways.

I know how hard the Senator from California and the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma have worked on the highway bill. So I just want to say I have tremendous respect for the Senator and appreciate her efforts in this regard and want to give kudos to her. Keep it up. We have to get this done.

Mrs. BOXER. I say to Senator HATCH, that means a lot to me. I so remember that the Senator from Utah set the pace for bipartisan cooperation when he worked with the late great Senator Ted Kennedy. People looked at the two of you and said: This is impossible. But my colleague was able to find the common ground and build on it, and I watched that.

Senator INHOFE and I have been able to do our best to also find the sweet spot where we could come together and work together. I just wanted my colleague to know that the teamwork I watched between himself and Senator Kennedy from time to time on very important issues made an impression on me and certainly on the Senate and on the whole country.

Mr. HATCH. If the Senator will yield again—

Mrs. BOXER. Of course.

Mr. HATCH. I remember when we finally got together. It was way back in 1980–1981.

Mrs. BOXER. That is right.

Mr. HATCH. From that point on we found ways of coming together and getting things done that are monumental and landmark pieces of legislation. There is no reason why we can't do that today.

Let me just mention that on the Committee on Finance we have put out of the committee almost 40 bills that are bipartisan—not just one Democrat or one Republican, but bipartisan in nature—not the least of which is the highway bill—the funding, rather. And I just have to say that we are doing what we should do here.

I think people feel good about it. I have had people come up and say it is wonderful we are having amendments again and working together and we are getting things done. And I certainly attribute some of that to the distinguished Senator from California and the work she is doing here in the Senate. I do personally appreciate working with her.

Let's get this done. I will do everything in my power to help the Senator from California, and I thank her so much.

Mrs. BOXER. Yes. I say to Senator HATCH, we are going to have some tough votes coming up, and some people aren't going to like this amendment or that amendment, but all I want to say is this: Let's keep our eye on what the prize is.

Before the Senator leaves the floor, I want to share with him a photo. Last week, on the California-Arizona border, a bridge collapsed. Now, this bridge had been rated as structurally obsolete because so much traffic was going between California and Arizona—so much more traffic than was anticipated. We are so fortunate there were no deaths involved.

To me this is the reason why we are doing what we are doing. We just can't sit back and wait for some great, wonderful future promise to come down from the sky and say: We have solved the funding problems.

We want to find that solution. It is not at hand. So what the Senator did, which was so important—working with all the members of the Committee on Finance and across party lines with leadership and everybody else—was to put together sources of funding that he felt the Senate could live with.

As it turned out, there were a couple of things that were a bridge too far—talking about bridges—for a couple of Members, and we are fixing those. We are fixing those, and it is good. But none of these pay-fors are delightful. They are all hard. But this is what we are trying to turn around.

So I say to my colleagues on both sides—and I have said it to my own caucus over and over—nobody is going to love every page of this bill because that is the nature of legislating. If we each could write our own bill, we would love every page. We would be thrilled. We would blow kisses at every page. But we don't write it ourselves. We have to step back, and we have to allow the process to work.

Yesterday, that process worked. It was tough, but we got more than 60 votes to begin work on a long-term surface transportation bill. That bill is going to give certainty to our States—3 years of certain funding and a 6-year authorization, with the hope that in the coming months we can figure out a good way to look at international tax reform and other ways to pay for the final 3 years.

But let me be clear. It has been more than 10 years since we have had more than a 2-year extension. This is a 3-year bill, and it makes great improvements in the Environment and Public Works title.

We really did compromise, Senator INHOFE and I, and he and I really worked well together in this area. This cloture vote was so key and so important to business and labor and all the people who know they don't want this to happen to them in their State, in

their commute. How many more bridges have to fail before we recognize that we can't be patching up this highway trust fund little by little? It is just not working.

I often say this—and I hope it doesn't bore people because I have said it a lot—if you wanted to buy a house and you found a house and you went to a good banker and he or she looked at you and said "I have great news for you, Mr. or Mrs. America—we have checked your credit rating, your credit rating is great, and we are going to give you a mortgage" and you said "That is wonderful news" and then they said "But it is only for 6 months or 5 months or 1 year," you are not going to buy that house. That is what we have been doing to our States and local entities. They can't build anything new. They can't make investments that are important because they don't have a guarantee that the funding will be there.

The beautiful thing about our funding system is it is Federal, State, and local, and there is even sometimes some private money that comes in. So the Federal Government is the spark. I don't know what the Presiding Officer's ratio is in Louisiana, whether it is 50/50 or 60/40. In my State, it is about 50/50. We have 50 percent local State dollars to 50 percent Federal dollars. Some of our States rely on the Federal Government for 90 percent of their transportation dollars, and one State, 100 percent. So this isn't a question of having the States do this by themselves; they really can't do it by themselves.

It was President Eisenhower—a Republican President—so many years ago who said if we are going to have a strong country, if we are going to protect our national security, we have to be able to move people and move goods. He took a tour across this great Nation, and he came up with the notion of a highway trust fund and a national transportation infrastructure.

Well, the EPW Committee—which I am the ranking member of and Senator INHOFE chairs—provides about 70 percent of the spending in this Transportation bill. We came together in a 20-to-0 vote and voted in favor of the DRIVE Act. This is going to support millions of jobs—not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of jobs across our great Nation—and it will provide economic security. If we don't do this and we wind up with a patch, believe me when I tell you that our States will shut down their programs because they just can't move forward.

It is imperative that we act now—I agree with Senator HATCH—because we have come so far. If we don't do this, we will be looking at another extension. Somebody told me it was the 34th extension—the 34th extension. That is not right. We need to do our work. The committees have done their work.

I was happy to hear that Senator BROWN now says that the transit funding is good. It is very good, as well as the highway funding.

So I want people to keep in mind the picture of this bridge. It means that when there are goods moving through from Arizona to California or California to Arizona, the cars and trucks have to go 400 miles out of their way—the cost of that to our Nation's business, the difficulty of that to those who drive the trucks and the vans.

I will say that this link is closed indefinitely. That is a terrible thing to say. They don't have a plan to fix this because it is so complex, and we need the funding so that they can. We have emergency funding in this bill—\$100 million per year—to look at situations like this and come in and help.

How many more bridges have to collapse before we do our job? We cannot be economically competitive when truckers delivering goods have to drive 400 miles out of the way to get goods from one State to another.

Here are the facts: There are 61,300 bridges that are structurally deficient in America. Fifty 50 percent of our roads are in less than good condition. We have no excuses. We need to move forward.

I will show a list of supporters of our work. I just implore those 38 or so Members who voted no on going to this bill—I ask you to take a look at these groups and tell me in your heart of hearts how you can say no to them. These are hard-working people. They are Republicans. They are Democrats. They are Independents. They are people of every political stripe—the American Highway Users Alliance, the American Public Transportation Association, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Trucking Associations, equipment distributors, general contractors, equipment manufacturers, metropolitan planning organizations, the National Asphalt Pavement Association.

I have four of these charts. These are the people who want us to vote yes: The National Association of Counties—I started off as a county supervisor—they know the bridges and roads are in disrepair; the National Association of Manufacturers; the National Association of Truck Stop Operators; the National Governors Association; the League of Cities; the ready mixed concrete people; the sand, stone, and gravel people; the independent drivers; the Portland Cement Association; the Retail Industry Leaders Association.

Here is another one, the last one: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Now, I ask you, when do we see the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the Laborers' International Union of North America, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters—when do we see all these on the same side? The answer: When we write a highway bill.

America is coming together around our efforts. We should be unanimous even though there are parts of the bill I don't like and you don't like. Colleagues, we cannot have a perfect bill.

It is an imperfect bill in an imperfect world. But unless we wrote it ourselves, we would never be thrilled with every provision.

I will finish. The AAA—remember those people we call when we break down? The AAA said: Pass a bill. They are tired of coming out to start up cars that aren't running well because they get caught in some kind of sinkhole.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors; the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials; Mothers Against Drunk Driving—and I want to say that at first Mothers Against Drunk Driving opposed this bill. Now they support it. There is also the American Council of Engineering Companies.

This is a list of people who are begging us to pass this bill.

Democrats stood here, and we called on the Republicans to please come up with a bill, and they did. There were reasons to say we didn't love it, and we sat down and we worked hard. I have to say that Senator MCCONNELL and his staff, my staff, Senator INHOFE's staff, Senator DURBIN and his staff—we have been working hard. We are still working to get more votes. We need more votes. We need this to happen.

Today my plea is that the clock is ticking. We have 8 days, colleagues, until the highway trust fund goes bust. Guess what. We can solve this problem, get a strong bill that increases funding in the first year by 6 percent and after that a couple percent a year for 3 years. It scores well. It doesn't add a penny to the deficit. I am so glad we are moving forward, but we need more support.

Here is my last plea to everybody who might possibly be listening—maybe my relatives, but in addition to that, anyone who might be listening: There are going to be amendments that I don't like and that you don't like. Could we try to keep our eye on the prize? This is the prize. We don't want this happening anyplace in this country. It brings devastation.

We have a good bill before us. Is it perfect? No. Are the pay-fors perfect? No. Are we continuing to improve it? Yes. Can we always do more later? Yes.

Let's say yes together, Republicans Democrats. Let's deliver this for the American people.

I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

HONORING VIETNAM VETERANS AND NORTH DAKOTA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN VIETNAM

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, as I do on many Thursdays, I rise again today to share about the lives of the men from my State, the North Dakotans who died during the Vietnam war. I have been talking about the 189 men who didn't make it home, but that is not a complete accounting of the people we lost as a result of Vietnam.

Many of our Vietnam veterans continue to feel the effects of their service

long after they return home. Some developed medical conditions that, quite frankly, are hard to explain. I have worked with a number of these men, many of whom became my friends and one who is very special to me, a veteran by the name of Bill Broer, who was former director of the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

WILLIAM "BILL" BROER

William "Bill" Broer started his work in law enforcement as a security policeman in the U.S. Air Force. During the Vietnam war, Bill was stationed at a base that supported aircraft that was used in Agent Orange campaigns. Bill died in 2002, at the age of 53, from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

In 1989, Bill was appointed Director of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and was an outstanding law enforcement official. He was awarded the Attorney General's Meritorious Service Award in 1991 and the North Dakota peace officers highest award, the Lone Eagle Award, in 1996.

Bill worked hard for North Dakota law enforcement both at his desk in our office and during his free time. He started a bowling tournament to bring together people involved in law enforcement from across our State so they could get to know each other and work together in an environment that took them away from their official duties. That tournament is now in its 30th year.

Bill also was instrumental in creating the Peace Officers Memorial that stands on the capitol grounds today, recognizing that those who serve in law enforcement also take that risk every day that so many of our servicemen do in protection of our people.

But I want to say something more than that about Bill. I am quite certain I probably would not have been attorney general without Bill's help, and I certainly don't believe I would have been a United States Senator without the lessons I learned from Bill Broer. He was a great friend and a trusted adviser to me.

Quite honestly, I don't know anyone in law enforcement who didn't absolutely love him. His staff was devastated when Bill was taken ill. We were devastated when we lost Bill way too early—I know not as devastated as his wonderful wife and his two great daughters. I remember when he used to rush home so he could be at a basketball game, of course in his suit and tie, always cheering them on. His only fault probably was being an Atlanta Braves fan.

JOHN SCHNEIDER

Another friend of mine, John Schneider, died in 2001 from a brain tumor. He also was a Vietnam-era veteran and a true friend and public servant of the highest caliber.

John served in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan in the 1960s and was tops in his language class, which was learning Pashto. He worked with farmers to introduce a hardier, more productive wheat variety to the region.

While in law school, John was drafted. He entered the Marine Corps in 1970 and was deployed to bases in Japan and the Philippines during the Vietnam war. John finished his law studies after he was discharged and joined a firm in Fargo, ND. He was elected to the North Dakota House of Representatives in 1982 and was known for his brilliant command of the legislative process. He was appointed U.S. attorney for North Dakota in 1993. In fact, he served in that capacity because I begged him to join me. He served as our U.S. attorney during those same years that I served as attorney general, and we spent a lot of time together, especially in Indian Country, working on the law enforcement issues of the day.

John was devoted to his wife Lois and their sons Jasper and Rocky. He loved cooking—cooking with way too much salt for them—and visiting with them for endless hours, even taking longer routes to school so he and his sons could talk.

John organized the Schneider baseball games, family tennis matches, and other competitions. The boys have a love of baseball to this day because of John. He loved to sing, knew thousands of songs, had a beautiful voice, and wrote and produced original family Christmas plays for 15 years.

John was thoughtful and kind. He loved life and he loved North Dakota and its people.

Now I have the privilege of sharing about the lives and deaths of other North Dakotans, those men who did not come home from the war.

JAMES "JIMMY" LEVINGS

James Levings was commonly called Jimmy. He was from New Town. He was born on October 18, 1948. He served in the Army's 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Jimmy was 19 years old when he was killed May 23, 1968.

His father James Conklin, Jr., served our country in the Army during the Korean war, and his grandfather Martin Levings also served in the Army in Europe during World War I.

Jimmy grew up close to his grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. They said Jimmy thought the world of hunting, hiking, and riding horses.

His family appreciates the letters he mailed them when he was serving in Vietnam. They remember the pictures he mailed them and how proud he looked to be serving his country.

Jimmy's cousin Rex Mayer said he enjoyed when Jimmy stayed with his family when they were young because Jimmy was like an older brother who played with him and took him to the movies at the nearby theater. Rex said Jimmy was 17 years old when he enlisted in the Army and volunteered to return to Vietnam for his second tour. Rex remembers seeing Jimmy when he was home on leave between his tours and that Jimmy had a different look about him, that he was changed by what he experienced in Vietnam.

Jimmy was shot and killed in Vietnam when he approached his base perimeter and was accidentally mistaken as a hostile force.

Jimmy is buried in Snowbird Chapel Cemetery and his name is memorialized on the Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Fallen Soldiers Memorial near New Town.

WARD WALTER

Ward Walter was born October 13, 1917. Prior to serving in Vietnam, Ward had lived in McKenzie County and in Minot. He served in the Army's 720th Military Police Battalion. Ward was 50 years old when he died on November 29, 1967.

Ward spent most of his adult life working in law enforcement and serving in the Army. Based on Ward's time in the Army and experience in four countries, his fellow soldiers became like family to him. His camaraderie and guidance earned him the nickname of Pop.

One month after arriving in Vietnam, Ward's team was tasked with setting up an ambush. Once in their ambush position, a U.S. Army jeep drove by and spotted movement. Thinking Ward's team members were opposing forces, the jeep opened fire, shooting Ward in the chest and killing him.

To commemorate Ward, members of his battalion named the movie theater at their post in Vietnam the Sergeant Ward "Pop" Memorial Theater.

The Army recognized Ward's service by issuing him the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, the Purple Heart, and the Good Conduct Medal.

LEON LOCHTHOWE

Leon Lochthowe was from Minot. He was born March 23, 1945. He served in the Marine Corps' Mike Company, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. Leon died on September 22, 1967. He was 22 years old.

Leon was the oldest of four children born to Don and Donna Lochthowe. His mother Donna said that growing up on the family farm, Leon was a free spirit and enjoyed riding his dirt bike in off-road races. He married Betty Berg, and they had a son Rickie and daughter Kimberly.

On September 10, 1965, Leon, his wife, and two children were driving north of Minot and were hit head-on by a drunk driver. Leon's wife and both children were killed.

After his wife and kids' deaths, Leon's draft number was changed to that of a single man. He chose to enlist in the Marines. A year after his family's death, he arrived in Vietnam.

Leon's fellow marine Gerald Loretta credits Leon with saving his life by pulling him to safety after he was wounded so badly he could not move. Other fellow marines have also written about Leon's heroism during his service.

On September 22, 1967, Leon received a letter from his mother stating that his parents were in California with his brother Gary, who was critically ill with spinal meningitis. Gary recently

had enlisted in the Marines and was in his first days of basic training when he was hospitalized. That same afternoon, rockets and artillery began shelling the area that Leon was defending. Shrapnel struck him in the chest, and he was killed instantly.

Leon's parents left California, where their son Gary was in a coma, to return to Minot to receive Leon's body and hold a funeral. Just hours after arriving home, Donna learned that her father had died in his home. The day after his funeral, they held Leon's funeral. During Leon's funeral reception, the family learned their son Gary had just died in California. This is a family who had held three funerals for the men they love in just 1 week.

ROBERT "BOBBY" STOREY

Robert "Bobby" Storey was from Grand Forks, and he was born July 22, 1946. He served in the Army Reserve's 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade as a helicopter pilot. Bobby was 22 years old when he died on November 21, 1968.

He was the oldest of four children. His father Henry served in the Air Force and the family moved to different bases while the kids were young.

Bobby's sister Debbie said that Bobby was kind and had a smile that would light up a room. She remembers that in high school he played quarterback for the high school football team and was nicknamed Bunny because of how fast he could run. Bobby's friends came to their house often, which meant a house full of boys and a refrigerator stocked with milk.

Bobby attended college at the University of North Dakota. He joined the Sigma Nu Fraternity, and he and several of his fraternity brothers enlisted in the Army.

Bobby became a Warrant Officer helicopter pilot, and about a month after arriving in Vietnam his helicopter was shot down and Bobby was killed. After his death, Bobby's father also went to Vietnam, serving our country in 1970 and 1971.

After Bobby's death, both of Bobby's brothers chose to wear the number 22 on their sports jerseys, just like Bobby had in high school. In memory of Bobby, his youngest brother named their son Robert.

DELAND "DENNIS" ZUBKE

Deland "Dennis" Zubke was from Grassy Butte, and he was born October 28, 1951. He served in the Army's 15th Artillery Regiment. Deland was just 19 years old when he went missing on March 1, 1971.

He was one of five children born to Drusilla and Gerald Zubke.

One of Deland's fellow soldiers, Ralph, wrote a remembrance describing how Deland volunteered to take Ralph's place on a dangerous mission the day Deland was last seen. His actions that day under intense enemy and friendly fire made Deland a hero. In Ralph's eyes, Deland should have been awarded a Silver Star for his courage under the most difficult com-

bat conditions imaginable. Deland had arrived in Vietnam about 2 months earlier.

In 1978, the Army changed Deland's status from Missing in Action to Died While Missing. Deland has never been found.

DAVID KLINE

David Kline was born July 31, 1948, and was from Hurdsfield. He was in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. David died July 2, 1967. He was 18 years old.

David's sister Faye remembers that David was liked by everyone in Hurdsfield. David was the envy of many because he owned a pink and white 1957 Chevy convertible.

He played basketball for the high school team and liked playing his guitar for fun. "Dancing in the Streets" by Martha and the Vandellas was one of his favorite songs. He was senior class president and hoped to teach history someday.

He had a younger brother Curtis, who was just 11 months younger than David. They were so close, folks around town told them they were like twins.

Faye said that when she, David, and Curtis were young, they always participated in Memorial Day events, placing flags next to the headstones of our country's veterans. Faye recalls clearly that one time David noted that "someday, I will have a flag just like that."

She remembers the words he said to her, his little sister, the last time he left for Vietnam: "Don't grow up too fast."

ROBERT "BOB" FULLMER

Robert "Bob" Fullmer was from Grand Forks. He was born April 2, 1948. He served in the Army's 25th Infantry Division. Bob died on June 6, 1969. He was 21 years old.

Bob had two brothers, Bud and Bill. They both served our country. Bud served in the Navy and Bill served in the Army Reserve.

Bill said Bob was very social and enjoyed always having friends over. When Bob was killed in Vietnam, his parents donated his death gratuity to the Grand Forks Central High School to be used as a scholarship for students with average grades who wished to attend the University of North Dakota.

Bob's high school friend Barb Colby wrote a poem about Bob shortly after he died, and the poem was published in 1987 in the first issue of a magazine entitled "Reflecting on the Memories of War." This was her poem:

Why didn't you say goodbye
The January day,
When that damn warring airplane
Took you so far away?
Maybe you knew before you left
That you were going to die
So your heart just wouldn't let you
Come and say goodbye.
Please try and understand
I can't come to where you lie.
I guess I feel like you did then.
I just can't say goodbye.

After learning that Bob's mother had read her poem, Barb visited his mother

on Memorial Day. After their visit, Barb wrote a letter to the editor of the magazine describing how she and Bob's mother reminisced about Bob's life and the people who have contacted his mother since his death describing the ways they have touched his mother's heart.

Talking with Bob's mother and seeing her laughter, strength, and warmth made Barb realize, 17 years later, that her poem was not finished. Barb wrote this ending to her poem and dedicated it to Bob and his mother.

Seventeen years have come and gone
Again it's the month of May.

I went back home and met your mom
On this Memorial Day.

She talked of you as a child and son
I told her stories of our youth.

And as we shared our memories and loss
She taught me a simple truth.

She showed me that your memory is alive
So you'll never really die.

She made me laugh—she let me cry
She helped me to say goodbye.

These are just some of the stories I am privileged to share, hopefully with the rest of the country, as we continue this 50-year remembrance of the Vietnam war and the people who took part. I think it is so critical and so important, especially in this time when we call on people to make sacrifices, that so many of the young people here, who would be the age of the grandchildren of many of the people who served, appreciate and understand the extent of the sacrifice and the disruption of family but the love of country that is an inherent part of each one of these stories.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my very brief remarks Senator SULLIVAN be allowed to speak.

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

MONTANA WILDFIRES

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I want to bring attention to the serious wildfires going on in Montana as I speak. There are currently two large active fires burning in Montana, including 4,000 acres called the Reynolds Creek fire right in Glacier National Park, as well as the Cabin Gulch fire, 2,500 acres, near Townsend.

Our fire crews are putting themselves in harm's way to protect our lands, our forests, and our communities. With lower-than-average snowpack, we have had less-than-average rains. It has created a situation. We have very low water levels in our rivers and our streams, and our firefighting teams are facing ripe conditions for wildfire.

They are also being driven by high winds and dry fuels. So far this year, we are experiencing the second worst fire season in terms of impacted areas in a decade. The situation could only get more serious in the coming weeks and months.

Our communities, our watersheds, our wildlife habitat, our access to

recreation—all of these critical Montana treasures—are at risk for wildfire. Please join me in praying for the safety of our firefighters, and please thank them for a job and service well done for the State of Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to begin my remarks this afternoon by commending my colleague from North Dakota for her weekly tributes to our Vietnam veterans. I have watched her do that week after week. It is very moving. It speaks volumes to her character as well as the character of the veterans from North Dakota.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to speak about one of the important issues facing the Senate today, for weeks, months, and maybe even years, and that is the debate we are having over the Iran nuclear agreement.

Many of my colleagues have already spoken very eloquently and very patiently about this agreement. I want to give one example. My colleague from Maine, Senator KING, was on the floor the other day when I was presiding. He was imploring us to fully debate the issue. He stated: "The truth emerges from the fire of an argument on an issue of this importance." I couldn't agree more. We should debate this issue. We should fully vet this issue. We should bring all of the voices of the people we represent into this body to debate this issue.

Where to begin? There is so much here, so many issues. We have seen some of them: centrifuges, enrichment, inspections, sanctions, and anywhere, anytime inspections. We have to examine all of that.

I thought it was important today to step back and take a look at some of the big issues. There are three issues that I believe are particularly important as we start this debate: first, the role of the American people and this body and the Congress with regard to this agreement; second, the basic underlying premise of this agreement—the driving force that in many ways is behind this agreement; and third, the main goal as has been agreed to by the President and by Members of this body on what we should be trying to achieve with regard to this agreement.

First, the role of the American people in this body. There is confusion, which has been perpetuated by this administration, that those of us who are asking questions and are skeptical of the agreement are somehow being partisan. The President said that Republicans, no matter the deal, will disagree with him and not vote with him. In some ways he seems to be making this about his personal agenda. But with all due respect to the President, the Iranian nuclear agreement is much bigger than President Obama—much bigger. The President will be gone in 18 months, and the American people will have to live with the consequences of

this agreement for decades. That is why it is so important that the Congress debate and approve or disapprove this agreement. Yet, had the Obama administration had its way, we would not be doing this today—what we are doing right now—debating this agreement.

In fact, throughout this process, from the very beginning, they have been dismissive of the role of the American people through their representatives in Congress to weigh in and bring clarity and wisdom to what this agreement is all about. Just a few months ago, the President said that he did not want the Congress to be involved at all. We started debating an act on this floor to provide this body with an opportunity to review and approve. He said he would veto it—no involvement from the American people. The administration only backed off when a bipartisan group of Senators, Democrats and Republicans, stood firm—a veto-proof majority—and said: No, the American people need to be read into this agreement. That was when we passed the Iran Nuclear Review Act. I personally would have preferred that this be viewed as a treaty by the administration, but we are reviewing it now under that law.

The President and Secretary Kerry have taken the deal to the U.N. Security Council—again, before Congress and the American people even started to debate the issue. The Russians and Chinese were voting on this agreement before we had the opportunity to do so. Members of this body, Democrats and Republicans, implored the Secretary by saying: Don't do this; it is an affront to the American people. They didn't listen. Finally, the President is saying—even before we debate—if we are not in agreement with him, he is going to veto whatever we do in this body.

This is not how the Federal Government is supposed to conduct foreign policy. Throughout the history of this great body, weighing in and voting on international agreements and international treaties of this magnitude have been the Senate's most important job, the heart and soul of what we do in this body. Sadly, two former Members of this body—the President and the Secretary of State—have actively fought against our involvement.

But Alexander Hamilton knew better. In the *Federalist Papers*, he spoke about the critical role of the Senate in foreign affairs. He warned against the President having sole authority over issues of such a "delicate and momentous kind." He argued vigorously for the Senate to have a say on critical foreign policy and national security issues. Our history and the Constitution reflect this, and that is where we come in, and that is why we are debating this.

In examining the agreement, I think it is important to understand and look at the bigger picture. What is the driving force? What is the underlying premise? What is the philosophy that is

motivating this agreement? It is not hard to discern. From the beginning of the Obama administration, the President and his team have been focused on transforming our relationship with Iran to bring it into the community of respected nations, thereby transforming the Middle East. The President has talked about this a number of times. He highlighted this in a speech to the United Nations in 2013, and it is here again in the text of this agreement.

The text of the agreement states that the P5+1 expresses its desire to build a new relationship with Iran. That is in the agreement. This is a bold and ambitious goal, no doubt, but it is also dangerously naive. Interestingly, there is no reciprocal statement in the agreement by Iran about Iran wanting to have a new relationship with the United States or the West. We want it; they don't seem to want it. In fact, with its leaders regularly still chanting "death to America; death to Israel" even after the signing of this agreement, it seems very clear that Iran does not want a new relationship, and this is the biggest flaw of the agreement. It amounts to a high-stakes bet—the highest of stakes: the security of the United States—that Iran will change its behavior.

What I fear the most is if they don't change—and there is no sign that they are going to—within 10 years, by its own terms, this agreement will enable Iran to have a much stronger economy, a significant ballistic missile capability, to be on the verge of a nuclear bomb and still be the world's largest sponsor of state terrorism. This is a huge risk for the security of our country and our allies in the Middle East.

It doesn't have to be this way. This agreement could have mitigated these risks. We do this all the time in diplomacy. We tell countries that we negotiate with: If you improve your behavior, you will get rewarded incrementally, step by step—step by difficult step. For example, during the debate we had on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, I offered an amendment that was simple, but it was based on this issue: Sanctions would be lifted on Iran once Iran came off the list of countries that sponsored state terrorism. Simple. If you improve your behavior, you will get rewarded. This agreement does not do that. Instead, when you look at the structure of this agreement, it allows Iran to get almost all of the benefits up front.

Almost half of this agreement is about our obligations to lift sanctions in very minute detail—our obligations to lift sanctions on Iran within the next several months. Think about that. We had the leverage. The countries that negotiated this are among the most powerful in the world. We had Iran on the ropes with strong, American-led sanctions. We had the leverage, and we lost it with this agreement on the hope that Iran will change its behavior.

So far, it is clear that their leaders did not get the memo on the change of behavior or on the new relationship. Iran is still destabilizing the Middle East, holding Americans hostage, threatening Israel, and supporting terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and others, throughout the world. In fact, Iran, which is a nation that has had imperial ambitions throughout the Middle East for centuries, could very well accelerate its destabilizing activities as a result of the power and prestige this agreement provides them.

Supporters of this agreement, including the President, are arguing: Look, United States, we have done this before. We have negotiated with our enemies to a positive end. President Reagan did it with the Soviet Union. He got a constructive deal. But this is a flawed analogy both strategically and tactically. When we negotiated with the Soviet Union, it was a negotiation between the world's two superpowers that were armed with nuclear weapons, similar military strength—thousands of military weapons. Here, however, we are bringing a nuclear pariah into the club of nuclear powers. This is very different.

Tactically, Team Obama has never demonstrated the desire to walk away from this deal. This wasn't the case with President Reagan. He famously walked away from the Soviets in Reykjavik, Iceland, over a verification issue on the INF agreement. "This meeting is over," President Reagan said to George Shultz, his Secretary of State, when he thought we were giving away too much. "Let's go, George. We're leaving," said the President. And they did. They left. A year later, Mikhail Gorbachev came back to the table and agreed to onsite inspections of their nuclear facilities. America and the USSR signed the INF treaty, and Soviet power began to unravel. Contrast that to the experience we have heard about in the last few months of these negotiations on the issue of conventional weapons and ballistic missiles.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN Martin Dempsey, testified in front of the Armed Services Committee very recently. He said: "Under no circumstances should we relieve pressure on Iran relative to ballistic missile capabilities and arms trafficking." That was said by the No. 1 military adviser to the President of the United States. But we did. Within 7 days of that statement, we did. The embargo on conventional weapons and ballistic missiles is going to be lifted as part of this agreement. When the Russians and the Chinese pushed this position at the very end of these negotiations, Secretary Kerry should have listened to General Dempsey's military advice and he should have done what Secretary Shultz did. He should have walked. He should have walked away to get a better deal.

Finally, I wish to conclude by underscoring what everybody, from the

President to Members of this body, has agreed should be the principal negotiation objective of this agreement, which has always been to keep Iran from developing a nuclear weapon and to dismantle its nuclear capability.

In fact, this body weighed in last year—March of 2014—in a letter written by 81 U.S. Senators to the President of the United States about these negotiations. The letter had a number of benchmarks for the negotiators. One stated that sanctions "must continue until Iran abandons its efforts to build a nuclear weapon."

The letter then goes on to cite another critical basic goal of the agreement. It states: "We believe any agreement must dismantle Iran's nuclear weapons program and prevent it from ever having a uranium or plutonium path to a nuclear bomb." Last year, 81 Senators stated that. Let me repeat that: "We believe any agreement must dismantle Iran's nuclear weapons program and prevent it from ever having a uranium or plutonium path to a nuclear bomb." I agree with the 81 Senators. Mr. President, 40 Democrats, 40 Republicans, and 1 Independent signed that letter, and 72 of those Senators are still Members of this body. But they need to ask themselves: Are they sure this goal has been achieved?

I have read this entire agreement. I believe this goal has not been achieved, and that should deeply concern all Members of the U.S. Senate.

Let me conclude by quoting someone I normally do not quote on the floor of the U.S. Senate—Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who just this past Saturday stated the following: "Even after this deal our policy towards the arrogant United States will not change," and then he led the crowd he was before into chanting "Death to America." That is the country that we are hoping and risking our future on that will change, that we will have a "new relationship" with, as the agreement states.

To the American people: We will continue to debate this critical issue.

In the words of my colleague from Maine, we will bring the fire to the debate and a truth will emerge. Unfortunately, here is one truth that I find self-evident: Iran is not changing anytime soon. That is because this agreement didn't force it to.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if we ask most people in America what is the most heavily subsidized industry in America, which industry, which sector of our economy receives the highest level of Federal subsidy in America, I guess they would get it wrong, because it turns out the sector that gets the highest degree of Federal subsidy is for-profit colleges and universities—*for-profit colleges and universities*.

I wish to say a word or two about the current status of the largest of these

for-profit colleges and universities and the tactics they are using to become even fatter at the expense of the American taxpayers.

I will read a quote about the for-profit college industry:

They are not educators and they're looking to manipulate this model to make money. There is nothing wrong with making money, but I think anyone making money in an educational activity has a higher standard of accountability.

Some might think that was a quote from some speech I gave here. They would be wrong. That was a quote from John Murphy, a cofounder of the University of Phoenix, during a recent interview he gave to *Deseret News National*. As the article rightly observes, the University of Phoenix is the "grand-daddy" of the for-profit industry, but the enterprise has experienced a dramatic shift in priorities since it became a publicly traded company, according to Mr. Murphy, one of the cofounders. The reason for the change, according to Murphy, is the combination of the new corporate entity—for-profit University of Phoenix—chasing stock prices with the temptation of the open spigot of Federal funds. Mr. Murphy calls the Federal student loan money "the juice" of the for-profit college industry. And for its part, the University of Phoenix is swimming in the juice. They received 84 percent of their revenue from Federal title IV funding in 2012 and 2013. How much? It was \$3.5 billion.

According to law, for-profit colleges are prohibited—we don't want them to become too dependent on the Federal Government, so we prohibit them from receiving any more than 90 percent of their revenue from title IV Federal funding—90 percent.

When I think of the outrage I hear from those in Washington who track Federal money, I can't believe they are overlooking this industry. A major loophole, however, allows the University of Phoenix to not include veterans' GI Bill benefits or Department of Defense tuition assistance programs in their Federal revenue calculation. So I joined with Senator TOM CARPER of Delaware and others to fix this, to close this loophole, to hold the for-profit colleges to no more than 90 percent of the revenue coming directly from the Federal Government.

A recent article by Aaron Glantz published by the Center for Investigative Reporting provides a troubling look into the world of for-profit college recruitment of America's veterans and members of our military. The article details how the University of Phoenix has become a major sponsor of military events. In one instance, they paid \$25,000 to sponsor a concert for military members and their families. The company gave away Galaxy computer tablets and wrapped the stage in a giant University of Phoenix banner. In other instances, the Center for Investigative Reporting found that the University of Phoenix sponsored "resume

workshops" which essentially amounted to recruitment drives for their university. According to the article, the company sponsored hundreds of events on military bases, including rock concerts, Super Bowl parties, father-daughter dances, Easter egg hunts, chocolate festivals, fashion shows, and even brunch with Santa.

University of Phoenix paid \$250,000—a quarter of a million dollars—to sponsor events over the last 3 years at Fort Campbell, KY. Private sponsorship of military events is not unusual, but it has to raise some eyebrows when the company whose profits depend on recruiting servicemembers are paying for these programs. Let's face it. That is what these events are for—recruitment events for the company.

In the name of corporate sponsorship, the University of Phoenix could gain direct access to military bases with a nod and a wink to servicemembers: Come to Phoenix. We care about the military.

Boy, has it paid off for Phoenix and what Mr. Murphy called "the juice" of Federal funds.

The University of Phoenix is the fourth largest recipient of Department of Defense tuition assistance funds which help servicemembers continue their education. In fiscal year 2014, the University of Phoenix received more than \$20 million of these benefits. But hold on tight. Here is where the juice gets deep. When it comes to veterans' GI Bill funding, the University of Phoenix is a top recipient in America of these funds—\$272 million. In return, the company offers servicemembers and veterans degrees of questionable value, below-average graduation rates, and—get this—a student loan default rate almost 40 percent higher than the national average. That is what we are offering to members of our military and veterans through the University of Phoenix and their programs.

I don't think this type of behavior by the University of Phoenix is what the President had in mind when he signed Executive Order 13607, intended to prevent for-profit colleges from gaining preferential access to our military.

I have written to Secretary of Defense Ash Carter about the outrage. If it is a matter of University of Phoenix not following DOD rules, I want the Department to take action. If the University of Phoenix's actions outlined in this report are within the rules, the rules need to be changed.

I want to say a word about another story by the Center for Investigative Reporting last week. This is almost incredible. It is difficult for me—I can't—to recount the details of the story I am about to relate, and my colleagues will understand why in a moment.

According to the Center for Investigative Reporting, nearly 2,000 unaccredited institutions received more than \$260 million in GI Bill benefits between 2009 and 2014. Some of them are for profit; all are totally unaccredited. When someone serves in

our military, we offer them GI Bill benefits—once-in-a-lifetime benefits—for the betterment of themselves and their family. Once they have used the benefits, they are gone.

One example of one of these unaccredited institutions that is receiving these benefits for our military—GI Bill benefits—is a sexual therapy school in San Francisco. The name of it is the Institute For Advanced Study of Human Sexuality—unaccredited. The activities that are described in the article about this school I cannot say on the floor of the Senate. The institute openly brags—this unaccredited institute receiving GI Bill benefits openly brags about its massive collection of pornography, and we sent this institution GI Bill funding. That is outrageous.

Seven other Senators joined me in writing to Secretary McDonald of the VA last week asking him to investigate and explain. I also expect to speak with him by next week, and I hope to hear that the VA is taking action. The GI Bill is too important for our veterans to have these benefits ever questioned because of a scandal such as this.

Stories such as these abuses by the for-profit college industry and these unaccredited so-called schools are appearing more frequently. In newspapers and other media outlets across America, this issue has never received so much attention. Unfortunately, here in the Halls of Congress, you can still hear the crickets when it comes to this issue. I hope this changes. If we are serious about really caring about our military and their families and our veterans, if we are serious about caring about taxpayers' dollars, if we are honest about this industry that is fleecing the American taxpayers and members of our military, this Congress should act on a bipartisan basis. But some of these schools have friends in high places. Every time I have tried to call them out, someone has stepped in to their defense, usually in a private manner so the public doesn't know.

The day of reckoning is coming for these for-profit schools. The stock market is catching up with them. Stockholders are catching up with them. Students and their families are catching up with the fact that they are a waste of time and money. Now we have to make sure the taxpayers have their day and their attention directed toward this outrageous exploitation.

5TH ANNIVERSARY OF DODD-FRANK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, July 21 marks the fifth anniversary of the enactment of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

Let's remember what was happening when the law was created. In 2008, we were staring in the face of the greatest economic meltdown since the Great Depression. Wall Street banks and financial companies had built a multi-trillion dollar house of cards. They built it out of subprime and predatory mortgage lending, mortgage-backed securities with inflated credit ratings,

and unregulated derivatives based on these mortgages. It was enormously complex and risky, and our financial regulatory system was ill-equipped to oversee it. It all started coming apart when several mortgage lenders went under, and Bear Stearns began wobbling.

Then in March 2008 Bear Stearns went down. By September 2008 one giant financial company after another started collapsing: Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG, Washington Mutual, Wachovia. It was a time of panic. Credit markets froze. The stock market swung wildly. Congress had to take dramatic steps to stop the economy from going into free fall. Who suffered the most from Wall Street's misbehavior? Main Street Americans.

As a result of the financial crisis, unemployment went up over 10 percent. Nearly nine million Americans lost their jobs. Millions of families faced foreclosure on their homes. More than \$19 trillion in household and retirement wealth was wiped away.

It was clear we had to act to get out of this "great recession," and we did. We saved the auto industry, passed the Recovery Act to boost the economy, and stabilized the economy. We have now had 64 consecutive months of job growth, and the unemployment rate is down to 5.3 percent. But it was clear to all of us who lived through that financial crisis that we needed to reform our financial regulatory system and curb risky and predatory financial practices.

Five years ago, we did just that by enacting the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. It took months of legislating—dozens of hearings, extended debate and amendments in committees and on the floor, and a robust conference committee process. The result was a landmark reform law that reined in the worst abuses of Wall Street and provided critical new protections for consumers and Main Street businesses.

One of those was the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB. I remember back in 2007 when a law professor named ELIZABETH WARREN told me about all the tricks and traps that banks and mortgage companies were using on consumers. She said we need an agency that is focused like a laser on making sure that there is transparency and fairness in consumer financial products. I agreed. So in 2008 I introduced the first bill that sought to create this consumer financial protection agency.

I could not have been prouder when this agency was established by the Dodd-Frank Act. This was a landmark win not only for consumers but for our overall economy.

When consumers have transparent and accurate information about financial products, they are empowered to make better choices. Senator WARREN did an admirable job of getting the CFPB up and running. And now, under the leadership of Richard Cordray, the

CFPB has achieved great success in protecting consumers, especially those most often targeted by wrongdoers—students; older Americans; service-members, veterans and their families; and the economically disadvantaged. To date, the CFPB has obtained over \$10 billion in relief to consumers through its enforcement actions.

The CFPB went after several of the Nation's largest credit card companies for targeting their customers with deceptive and fraudulent activities. This resulted in nearly \$2 billion being paid back to more than 12 million customers nationwide. To further protect students and their families, the CFPB has brought action against for-profit colleges for their predatory lending practices.

In November 2013, the CFPB announced its first enforcement action in the predatory payday lending industry. This led to \$14 million in restitution from Cash America for targeting servicemembers and their families and violating the Military Lending Act in the process. Since then, the CFPB has continued to limit the ability of payday lenders to prey on vulnerable families across America.

The CFPB is a tremendous success story. But the successes of Dodd-Frank don't stop there.

When the Dodd-Frank bill was on the Senate floor, I offered an amendment that dealt with the issue of debit card swipe fees. This amendment was adopted by the Senate with 64 votes—47 Democrats and 17 Republicans—and it was enacted into law. My amendment marked the first time that Congress acted to rein in excessive swipe fees, which were lining the pockets of big banks and costing billions for merchants and their consumers. I am pleased to report this reform has achieved significant success.

For those who don't remember, swipe fees are fees fixed by Visa and MasterCard, and are paid by merchants to card-issuing banks whenever a purchase is made with a card. Because Visa and MasterCard set the fees on behalf of all banks, there is no competition between banks on the fee rates—so the rates always went up. By 2009, the banks were collecting about \$16 billion per year in debit swipe fees from merchants. And merchants had to pass that cost on to their customers in the form of higher prices. Of course, the banks didn't need all of this swipe fee money to conduct debit transactions. The actual cost to process a debit transaction is just a few cents. But the banks and card companies exploited the swipe fee system so they would receive far more than they would ever need—an average of 44 cents per transaction.

It didn't have to be this way. Many other countries have thriving debit card systems with swipe fees strictly regulated or prohibited altogether. But in the U.S., swipe fees were spinning out of control. There were no market forces working to keep fees at a reason-

able level. So I offered my amendment to bring some reasonable regulation to this system.

My amendment said that if the Nation's biggest banks are going to let Visa and MasterCard fix swipe fee rates for them, then the rates must be reasonable and proportional to the cost of processing a transaction. And my amendment also said there needs to be a real choice of card networks available for each debit transaction. This reform cut the average debit swipe fee in half, from about 44 cents to about 24 cents.

This is actually pretty modest reform. Most other countries have gone much further in regulating swipe fees. But boy, did the big banks scream about it. They said swipe fee regulation would be the end of the world. They claimed it would kill the debit card system, devastate small banks and credit unions, and cause banks to jack up other fees on consumers. Well, the law took effect in 2011, so we have had some time to see how it has worked. And as it turns out, the horror stories that the banks predicted turned out to be pure fiction.

Let us look at the facts. First, swipe fee reform hasn't hurt the growth of the debit system. Debit card use continues to grow each year, according to the Federal Reserve. And it hasn't hurt small banks and credit unions, either. My amendment exempted all but the biggest one percent of card-issuing banks from fee regulation. The Fed announced in May 2013 that this small issuer exemption "is working as intended."

Credit unions and small banks have thrived since the amendment took effect, because the amendment has enabled them to receive higher fees than their big bank competitors. It has helped level the playing field between the big banks and the little guys.

Don't take it from me. Here is what press releases from the Credit Union National Association have said since my amendment took effect in 2011:

November 2012: "Credit Unions Growing at Sustained, Increasingly Strong Pace."

March 2013: "The credit union movement is healthy, vibrant and on the rise."

Last February: "Credit unions experience fast growth on all fronts in 2014 . . . 2015 expected to surpass banner year."

I know the small banks and credit unions will never thank me for this reform. But the reality is they have gained a competitive advantage through this reform. It has helped them.

And how about consumers? Well, the banks said my amendment would cause consumer checking fees to go through the roof—and they still try to pretend that is the case. But the facts say otherwise.

Last September the Wall St. Journal reported that "After peaking in 2009, the annual account fees collected at U.S. commercial banks have declined markedly, even as the volume of bank deposits has swelled." Transparency

and competition is helping keep fees down.

The American Bankers Association reported last year that 62 percent of Americans pay nothing at all for bank services. And this year Bankrate.com found that 72 percent of credit union checking accounts came with no maintenance fees.

And what about savings to consumers? Well, noted economist Robert Shapiro did a study in 2013 and estimated that swipe fees overall were reduced by about \$8.5 billion in 2012. He estimated that about \$6 billion of these reductions were passed along from merchants to consumers in the form of lower prices.

While it may be hard to see those price reductions when you spread the savings across the entire economy, the fact is that the savings are real. Unfortunately, the savings should have been even greater. When the Federal Reserve drafted a proposed rule for my amendment, they planned for a fee cap of 7 to 12 cents—far closer to the actual cost of processing a debit transaction. But the banks lobbied the Fed hard to double the proposed cap, and the Fed gave in to the bank lobbyists. Of course, the banks and card companies promptly took advantage of the watered-down regulation and turned the fee cap into a fee floor. As a result, there are still excessive swipe fees begin charged in the debit system—not to mention credit card swipe fees, which have not been reformed at all.

There is no doubt that swipe fees continue to distort the incentives in our payments system. Banks and card companies continue to shape the system to maximize fees instead of efficiency and security. Just look at the issue of card security technology. The banks ignored this for years—until my amendment made part of the debit swipe fee contingent on having effective fraud prevention technology in place.

Just a few weeks after my amendment took effect in 2011, Visa finally announced a roadmap to promote adoption of smart-chip cards in the United States. MasterCard soon followed. That is good news, but unfortunately the banks and card networks are still steering away from using PINs on cards—even though the rest of the world uses a chip-and-PIN system and PINs mean lower fraud. Why avoid PINs? Because several other card companies compete with Visa and MasterCard on PIN transactions, and the competition means the fees are lower. Further reform is needed to correct these skewed incentives.

We have more work to do to make sure our credit and debit card systems are competitive, transparent and fair. I hope the Federal Reserve and my colleagues in both parties will work with me in this effort.

Unfortunately, when it comes to Dodd-Frank, Republicans in Congress have spent the past 5 years trying to undermine this legislation. We must

not forget the lessons we learned from the financial crisis. We can't go back to the system we had before Dodd-Frank. Instead let's work together to protect what works, make constructive improvements, and expand Dodd-Frank's reforms where needed.

Remember, Wall Street used to get its way all the time around here, and they led us down a path that almost took our economy off a cliff. Let's not go back there. Let's promise the American people that never again will Congress allow financial tricks and traps to bring our economy to near-ruin.

I see one of my colleagues on the floor, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

TROOP SAFETY

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, the dangers our troops face extend beyond war zones and unfortunately to within our Nation's borders, and it is time our policies reflect their risks no matter where they are stationed.

Just like the attack at the Little Rock Army recruiting station and the tragedy at Fort Hood, the recent senseless shootings in Chattanooga happened when our troops were unarmed, leaving them no way to defend themselves.

I fully support the actions of Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson to do what is necessary to protect the Arkansas National Guard by allowing members to be armed at guard installations. However, the Governor only has authority over the Arkansas National Guard. While Governors of other States have issued similar directives, I urge Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and President Obama to order protective measures at Department of Defense installations.

HONORING MARINE STAFF SERGEANT DAVID WYATT AND THE OTHER SERVICEMEMBERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE CHATTANOOGA TRAGEDY

Mr. President, the vicious attack in Chattanooga changed the lives of the families of GySgt Thomas Sullivan, LCpl Squire Wells, Sgt Carson Holmquist, SSgt David Wyatt, and PO2 Randall Smith.

The attack hit especially close to home for Arkansas, where SSgt David Wyatt grew up. While he no longer called Arkansas home, the State always had a fond place in Staff Sergeant Wyatt's heart. He often visited his family who still live in the Natural State and taught his children how to call the hogs.

He was a 1998 graduate of Russellville High School. Staff Sergeant Wyatt was active in athletics and played in the school band. He also earned the Eagle Scout, the highest rank of the Boy Scouts. His Scoutmasters, classmates, and teachers fondly recalled David as a young man who was a natural leader with a lot of enthusiasm and a unique sense of humor.

A career in the military was a natural fit for Staff Sergeant Wyatt, who came from a long line of military serv-

ice. He enlisted in the Marines following the events of 9/11. During his 11 years in the military, Staff Sergeant Wyatt served in locations all over the world. He was well aware of the dangers of wearing the Nation's uniform, having served deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. His mom, Deborah Wyatt Boen, told the Russellville Courier that her son was proud to be a U.S. marine and called his fellow marines "brothers."

No one could have predicted the violence that targeted his life while he was working to protect and defend our Nation with his band of brothers. But with the nature of the current threats we face and with increased calls from groups such as ISIS to attack U.S. servicemembers at home, it is vital that we reevaluate our security practices for all our military installations and fix any vulnerabilities that put our personnel at risk.

On Thursday, July 16, 2015, SSgt David Wyatt made the ultimate sacrifice for his selfless service to our Nation. SSgt David Wyatt is a true American hero.

I ask my colleagues to keep his wife Lorri, daughter Rebecca, son Heith, and the rest of his family and friends in their thoughts and prayers.

On behalf of our grateful Nation, I humbly offer my appreciation and gratitude for his selfless service and sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today the Senate has begun work on legislation that would provide our States and communities across this great land the resources and reliability they need to soundly invest in our transportation infrastructure. After a full stumble start when our friends across the aisle decided to block our ability to proceed, they reconsidered, thankfully, and I am glad to see them join us to move forward on this sensible, bipartisan bill.

To this Senator, the most important part of the bill is that it doesn't kick the can down the road—at least not in the way we have done more than 30 different times. We have had more than 30 short-term transportation patches, which is a terrible way to do business, and frankly it should be embarrassing to us that we haven't been able to come up with a better solution.

While a 3-year transportation bill is no panacea, it represents progress and avoids a lot of the unpredictability and wait-and-see problems our States have had when it comes to planning longer term projects. Fortunately, this multiyear bill restores some sanity by providing resources over a consistent and dependable period of time. It is actually a 6-year bill. We have come up with a bipartisan group of pay-fors to take us 3 years out, but then hopefully we will continue to work on trying to find a way to pay for the last 3 years without adding to the deficit and debt, as has happened in the past.

This bill is really forward-looking, and this legislation provides the foundation for more commerce, more efficient travel, and more public safety by enhancing our transportation networks. In doing so, it provides for a more stable economic climate for the next generation, as our States plan to meet the needs of a continually growing population.

I am thankful in Texas that with strong economic growth and a lot of people moving there—voting with their feet, as I like to say—from other parts of the country, we know the value of good infrastructure. And when the highway fights in Washington, DC, froze to a standstill, Texas stepped up to the plate and refused to wait.

One example of that action that I mentioned earlier this week came last fall when Texans voted last November to overwhelmingly approve a measure that would provide an additional \$1.7 billion to upgrade and maintain our vast transportation infrastructure. This came from a surplus in our rainy day fund. That proposal was approved with more than 80 percent of the vote, and in so doing, Texans clearly prioritized improved infrastructure and understood that by making our roads more efficient, we can decrease the 44 hours of car time that Texans spend stuck in traffic annually.

The vote also showed that Texans realized that our State is poised to grow significantly. In fact, our economy, which grew 5.2 percent last year compared to 2.2 percent nationwide—one reason our economy is growing is because people are coming to Texas to pursue their dreams. We are going to need better roadways to absorb the estimated 18 million vehicles expected to be added to our roads by the year 2040. This bill will help Texas manage the influx of people and vehicles so that we will have the transportation infrastructure to support the millions of new people who will call Texas home in the not too distant future.

Texas has long known that good transportation infrastructure is part of what has made us the economic powerhouse we are today. Take, for example, the farm-to-market roads that opened more than 70 years ago, with the idea that our farmers and ranchers needed a reliable transportation network to get their livestock and crops to town. So basically our farm-to-market roads gave our rural areas more access to the towns and cities that purchased those goods. This helped Texas agriculture—a substantial part of our economy—and made it even more competitive by providing a reliable method to transport our grown and raised goods to market—first around the local community, then around the State, and now around the country.

Of course, I was pleased, along with a lot of folks in the agriculture sector in Texas, that we passed trade promotion authority with the promise of opening up even more markets around the world.

Many generations have benefited from the investments we made in infrastructure to help them get efficiently from point A to point B.

Just as the farm-to-market roads provided a more reliable transportation network throughout rural Texas, this legislation includes vital resources that will upgrade rural routes and freight corridors in addition to improving the overall safety and efficiency of nearly 20,000 miles of major roadways in Texas.

While it is not perfect, as the Presiding Officer knows, this bill represents some progress. I wish I could say we have solved our transportation problems in perpetuity, but I don't think that is possible. But doing it for 3 years beats the dickens out of another short-term patch, as I mentioned a moment ago, and kicking this can down the road does nothing to support the next chapter of population and economic growth.

As we continue to discuss and review this legislation, I am going to continue to encourage our colleagues to consider just how much our entire country needs to strengthen the infrastructure projects that will hopefully help that 2.2 percent growth which we experienced in 2014 nationwide go upward and upward because that will create more jobs and more opportunity.

We have also seen that under new leadership, starting this last January, we have been able to make incremental progress in a number of areas on a bipartisan basis. Frankly, given the response I heard from many of my constituents last year when they complained to me about the dysfunction here in Washington, DC—even though, again, they are not necessarily saying we have met the mark, they are seeing that we are trying to work hard on a bipartisan basis to meet their needs, and I think this bill represents that kind of progress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Georgia.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate, I am proud to be joined by other members of the committee for a colloquy and a report to the American people on the progress we are making to hold the VA accountable for our veterans and our taxpayers.

As all will remember, there was a terrible tragedy at the VA hospital in Phoenix last year. Because of missed appointments, erased records, consults that were removed, veterans waiting for services never got them, and in three cases they died. That was malfeasance in office and brought a great scandal to the VA.

In January, when our committee took hold, we decided to go to the Justice Department and the inspector general and say: Go into the VA, investigate these incidents that took place, and if we find criminal wrongdoing or

civil wrongdoing, we should prosecute these people to make sure it doesn't happen again.

I am never happy when anybody is indicted, but I was satisfied that last Friday the first indictment came down from the Justice Department against a VA hospital employee—unfortunately, in my State of Georgia at the VA hospital in Augusta—for 50 counts of falsifying medical records, the results of which ended up benefiting the employees and hurting veterans.

I promise the American people and Members of the Senate that this is not going to be the last indictment. We are going to see to it that people are held accountable for their actions and that they do what is right morally and what is right legally. We owe nothing less and we owe nothing more to our veterans than that type of treatment.

Yesterday the VA committee met, and we approved two great bills in our effort to bring about greater accountability. One of those bills was the Rubio-Johnson bill, which allows the firing and holding of accountability of VA employees for malfeasance and misconduct in office for cause.

As many people know, the VA oftentimes in disciplining people just moved them to another job at the same pay because they can't move them out of the system. So the accountability never takes place, there is no sense of accountability, and veterans are not well served. Thanks to the Rubio-Johnson bill, people who for cause are terminated will have a brief hearing and a chance to justify their case, and if their case is not justified, they will be removed from the Veterans' Administration health services agency and they will be fired. That is the type of accountability every American who is employed at their job has, and we think that is the same accountability every employee ought to have at the VA.

After that, we then passed the Cassidy-Ayotte bill, a bill that I was very proud of because Senator CASSIDY and Senator AYOTTE said the following: It is just not right for somebody who is not doing their job to get a bonus.

As many people know, bonuses were paid in the VA last year to employees who were being reprimanded for misconduct and bad behavior. You cannot take a benefit away retroactively, and this bill does not do that, but it says to the VA prospectively that rewards and bonuses cannot be earned by those who are not conducting their job in the way they should.

These are the types of accountability measures that people in the United States expect.

As chairman of the committee, I always want to brag about the good things VA employees do, and they do a lot of good things. For every one scandal you hear about, there are hundreds of thousands of benefits veterans are receiving because of good, loyal employees. But the best employees in the world are brought down a notch when

those who are not good are allowed to continue to stay on the job even if they are not performing or get bonuses when they are not performing.

I am so proud of the Cassidy-Ayotte bill and Johnson-Rubio bill, which say to the American people that we are going to have accountability; we are going to pay bonuses for good behavior, not bad behavior; and if somebody doesn't do their job, they will lose that job if that cause is justified. That is what the American people expect of the Senate, that is what they expect of our committee, and I am proud to report to the Senate today that started.

I am also proud to yield to the Senator from Louisiana, Mr. CASSIDY, a physician, a doctor who understands health services and who brought one of these accountability issues to the committee yesterday.

Senator CASSIDY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I thank the chairman.

This week, the VA committee passed out of committee S. 627, which establishes guidelines for the Secretary to deny bonuses to employees who have violated VA policy or law. It also ensures information on reprimands will be kept in the employee's permanent record. Our veterans deserve this bill.

When the VA scandal erupted in Phoenix last year, then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki rescinded the performance award given in 2013 to the career senior executive who ran this Phoenix VA health care hospital—a bonus that the Department said was awarded because of an administrative error. The employee appealed and a Federal judge directed the VA to repay the bonus despite the fact that the employee had improperly accepted more than \$13,000 in gifts from a lobbyist and failed to report them and manipulated data to conceal excessive wait times for veterans seeking health care.

The judge determined, however, that the VA did not have the authority to rescind her bonus. This is why many veterans do not trust the VA. Here is an administrator who, again, took \$13,000 in gifts from a lobbyist, did not report them, manipulated data and, nonetheless, gets a bonus. This is, by the way, while veterans were allegedly dying prematurely because of the care not given at this facility.

If we want to improve the VA system, we need to focus on the quality of the workforce. Workforce morale was seriously affected by those who abused their authority and nonetheless received bonuses or those who do not have information on reprimands retained in their permanent record, meaning it is that much harder to dismiss those employees who are not good.

How does this incentivize honest workers to do a better job if we reward those who do not do good jobs? This is a commonsense solution that the American people will view as a signal

that Congress is serious about improving veterans health care. In addition, S. 1082, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act, a bill introduced by Senators RUBIO and JOHNSON, would give the VA Secretary more flexibility to remove corrupt or poor-performing employees, not just top officials. The bill would expand the authority of the 2014 Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act to the entire workforce of the VA, which has made it easier to remove senior executives for wrongdoing.

This bill would also extend the probationary period for new VA employees. A veteran once told me that his perception was that the VA system was run for the benefit of employees, not for the benefit of the veteran who is the patient. This is incredibly unfair to the dedicated VA employees. But on the other hand, giving bonuses to those such as this Phoenix VA supervisor makes it understandable why he has this perception.

The legislation I have spoken of today helps restore accountability to the VA system so that all will know that the VA is run first, foremost, and always for the veterans seen there as patients.

I yield the floor to my colleague Senator ROUNDS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I rise today also to speak with regard to the work of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee yesterday passed some very critical legislation. It is great to see the chairman and the ranking member and how they worked together side by side—Republican and Democratic colleagues working together to improve the lives of our veterans and truly to begin the process of reforming a broken VA system.

More than a year ago, the VA wait list scandal was made public. One of the biggest reasons the problem grew so large was the lack of accountability within the VA. Yesterday, with bipartisan support, we reported out five bills. Among those were two bills focused on bringing accountability to the VA. I would like to talk about that process and about what I learned as a freshman Senator, stepping in and watching—after listening to all of the stories about how the Senate was dysfunctional and things were not working right; Republicans would not work with Democrats, and Democrats would not work with Republicans—how Chairman ISAKSON and Ranking Member BLUMENTHAL worked their way through these bills and unanimously passed them out of committee.

I also watched as some members offered amendments. The chairman suggested, strongly, that perhaps they should withdraw them because we did not have what we call pay-fors with them, where there might have been an expense, or we did not have a report saying whether it would add cost to a

VA system that was also already short on funding in those particular areas.

Rather than simply having votes and having acrimony, what those Members said was this: Would you work with us to see that our goals would be accomplished? I watched as our chairman, along with Ranking Member BLUMENTHAL, work to get the job done to make things better for veterans. It was not acrimonious. It was a matter of members of this committee working side by side committing to help each other make the VA perform better than what they have in the past.

That is the type of work that we need in the Senate. It is what our people want us to do. It is what veterans want to have happen. So I am here to say this can be done and it can be done correctly. I will also tell you that in talking with members of that committee afterwards, there was real interest. Republicans and Democrats side by side were saying: Look, there were some good ideas offered in that committee, and they would make good amendments to the bill, but we had to know what the costs were. The commitment on both sides of the aisle was to find a way to work together. I commend the chairman, and I commend the ranking member for their work and the way that they worked through some very serious issues.

The first one of those bills that I wanted to talk about was S. 1082, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act. It was introduced by Senators MARCO RUBIO and RON JOHNSON. Senator JOHNSON I am sure will be here to speak because he understands exactly from his constituents what the need is to reform the system.

This bill would allow for the removal or the demotion of employees of the VA based on performance or misconduct. It also gives the employee ample time to appeal the removal or demotion. Finally, it extended the probationary period for Senior Executive Service employees to make sure the high-ups are doing their jobs correctly.

The second one is S. 627, the Ayotte-Cassidy accountability bill. You have heard a little bit about it already. This bill would force VA employees who purposefully manipulated wait lists for veterans' health care to repay their bonus. It seems like only common sense—the kind of common sense we have in South Dakota and that we like to have. I know the Presiding Officer's home State in Nebraska has that kind of common sense. It says: If you are doing something wrong, you should not get paid a bonus and be allowed to continue on.

This behavior of any VA employee should not be tolerated—let alone rewarded. I am happy to see that this passed the committee, and it sends a message to the other hard-working employees of the VA administration that their hard work is not going to be tainted by individuals who are not doing their job correctly. Let me just share this. I just have to share this

story. Some things you think you would not see, and yet, in South Dakota, I have a good friend who is 83 years old. He is a veteran.

All he wanted to do was to get a new set of glasses. He has diabetes. He wanted to get it through the VA. He had gone to his own optometrist because in our part we don't have contracts yet in the central part of South Dakota through the VA for optometrists. So he had gone in and had separately paid for the work of the optometrist. The optometrist had written a prescription.

This veteran only wanted the VA to take care of the cost of the glasses. They expected him to travel over 150 miles to get to a VA facility to go get glasses. We sure don't want him driving. Yet that was the expectation—to come up.

Look, this is the kind of stuff that makes people irritated with the system that should be helping veterans. Our office got involved with it. In fact, I offered to go on out and meet with the VA in Sturgis, SD, to find out what the problem was and why they would not deliver this. My staff suggested that I should simply stop by if they could not take care of the problem.

The VA indicated at that point they would get it taken care of. But later they came back and suggested: Well, you know, we don't know why this guy should get new glasses more than every 2 years. That is because their contract would not allow for it. That is not the type of attitude we want among VA officials. That is not the way we should be treating our veterans.

This is the reason that we want accountability within the VA system. We found Republicans and Democrat side by side saying: We are going to fix it. Now, we have a long way to go. We have a man at the head of the VA right now that truly wants to fix it. He walked into the middle of a swamp, and he is up to his butt in alligators. But he is there to fix a problem. We want to do everything we can to give him the tools to get the job done right.

Hopefully, next week we will start with fixing a budget problem they have by simply allowing them the flexibility to take the resources that are already there within the Department and move them into locations where they are more appropriate. That is what this is all about—using a little bit of common sense in Washington, DC, to fix a problem for veterans that has gone on way too long.

Today I wish to say thank you to our veterans, to those men and women that wear the uniform of the United States of America. We cannot say enough about what they have done for the rest of us here. But we can continue to tell them thank you time and again and to send a message that we are not going to allow them to go without the services that they are entitled to, the services that we want to render to them in an appropriate fashion, and that we will work until we get it done and get it done correctly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise also to join my colleagues in support of a couple of bills that are supporting the finest among us. I certainly want to underscore the thanks that the Senator from South Dakota expressed to the men and women of our military, people to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude for defending this Nation and fighting for our freedoms.

I also really want to thank the good Senator from Georgia, the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for in a very expeditious fashion taking up some very good pieces of legislation that will hold accountable those individuals who are caring for the finest among us in our veterans health care centers.

But before I address those bills, let me make a couple of points about the vast majority of men and women who are working in those VA health care centers. They are dedicated individuals, and they are doing a great job providing health care to the men and women of our Armed Forces. Upon becoming a Senator for Wisconsin, I started visiting the VA medical facilities within our State and also in Minneapolis, a center that also serves veterans from Wisconsin.

What I found did not surprise me at all. I found those dedicated individuals, and they are providing excellent health care. The veterans I spoke to in the halls and throughout the State were very satisfied with the health care they were getting. They were more than satisfied. They heaped praise upon their care providers.

The wait times were pretty long. The parking lots were pretty full. But again, they underscored certainly what I saw—that the vast majority of those men and women—the nurses, the doctors, the administrators—in our VA health care facilities are really dedicated to the task, and they are doing a great job for our veterans. But the fact of the matter is that they are not all doing a good job. It is not a perfect system—not by a long shot. I give the press corps a great deal of credit for breaking stories, first in Arizona, where we saw those long wait times actually resulting in the deaths of some veterans.

Then, in early January, I first became aware, because of a news report, of a real problem in the Tomah, WI, VA health care facility. I think maybe the best way to approach this is to provide a timeline that I provided in a field hearing that we held. It was a joint field hearing between my committee, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the House raising the issue in the community.

It was an excellent hearing. It afforded the surviving family members of some of the veterans who had died in the care of the Tomah VA center the

ability to tell their stories, to make an impression, and to get the attention of the administrators of the VA to start correcting the problems. But in my opening statement, I laid out a timeline that I would like to repeat here.

In April of 2003, Dr. David Houlihan was disciplined by the Iowa Board of Medicine for having an inappropriate relationship with a psychiatric patient. According to the executive director of the Iowa Board of Medicine, the sanctions should have been a serious concern for future employers.

That was April of 2003. In 2004, Dr. Houlihan was hired as a psychiatrist by the Tomah VA Medical Center. In August of 2005, Dr. Houlihan became chief of staff of the Tomah Medical Center. In November 2007, Kraig Ferrington, a veteran who sought treatment for medication management, died from a lethal mixture of drugs. Autopsy results showed Mr. Ferrington had seven drugs in his system. In April 2009, it was known and documented by employees of Tomah VA that many patients had called him the Candy Man and that veterans were "prescribed large quantities of narcotics." Again, that was April of 2009.

In June of 2009, Dr. Noelle Johnson was fired from Tomah for refusing to fill prescriptions she believed to be unsafe. Dr. Johnson had raised concerns to her superiors, had sought guidance from the Iowa medical licensing board, and later spoke with the Drug Enforcement Administration about Dr. Houlihan.

In July of 2009, Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick was fired from Tomah. Dr. Kirkpatrick had raised concerns to his union about overmedication at Tomah. Tragically, later that day, on the day of his termination, Dr. Kirkpatrick committed suicide.

In August of 2011, the VA Office of Inspector General received an anonymous complaint about overprescription and retaliation by Dr. Houlihan at Tomah.

In March of 2012, a second anonymous complaint was filed with the IG against Dr. Houlihan. The OIG examined 32 separate examinations during his 2½-year-long inspection.

In March of last year, 2014, the Office of Inspector General finished its inspection of Tomah and administratively closed the case without making it public.

On August 30 of 2014, Jason Simcakoski died in the Tomah mental health wing as a result of a mixed drug toxicity. Simcakoski was a patient of Dr. Houlihan. His autopsy revealed he had over a dozen different medications in his system.

In September 2014, Ryan Honl began lodging whistleblower complaints about patient safety and quality of care at Tomah.

On January 8, 2015, the Center for Investigative Reporting published an article detailing overprescription and retaliation at Tomah. The article revealed that veterans and employees referred to the Tomah VA Medical Center as “Candy Land.”

On January 12, 2015, Candace Delis brought her father, Thomas Baer, to the Tomah VA Medical Center with stroke-like symptoms. Mr. Baer waited over 2 hours for attention. That day the facility’s CT scanner was down for “routine preventive maintenance.” Mr. Baer passed away 2 days later.

On February 26, 2015, the Office of Inspector General finally posted its Tomah health care inspection report on its Web site.

I called Candace Delis, the daughter of Thomas Baer, shortly after I heard of the tragic death of her father. I will never forget what she told me. She said: Ron, had I known the problems at the Tomah VA Medical Center, I never would have taken my father to the facility, and my father would be alive today.

I believe that to be a true statement. Accountability is something that is crucial in any organization. I ran a manufacturing plant for 31 years. I can’t tell you how corrosive it is to an organization if individuals within that organization are not doing their job, not pulling their full weight, undermining the shared goals of the organization. It is corrosive.

I was surprised when I offered a piece of legislation and the chairman of the VA committee allowed me to present that piece of legislation to the committee, the Ensuring Veterans Safety Through Accountability Act, and the VA representatives at that hearing were opposed to holding medical professionals accountable.

Fortunately, the chairman, the Senator from Georgia, agreed with me that the only way we are going to reform this system, the only way we can make sure we honor promises through our VA health centers to the finest among us—the men and women of the military—is by holding individuals accountable, which is exactly how the bill was reported out, sponsored by the Senator from Florida.

I truly thank him for his leadership on this issue, and I am pleased to join him as the lead sponsor of that bill. The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act of 2015 will hold every employee within the VA accountable. That is crucial.

Again, I thank our veterans, I thank the Senator from Florida, the Senator from Georgia, and I urge my colleagues to support this piece of legislation. Let’s get it passed. Let’s start holding those few bad apples—and I truly believe that. I think it is just a few people who need to be held accountable.

A little postscript to my timeline, and I think one of the reasons this piece of legislation is so important is even with that record dating back to 2004—and by the way, our own commit-

tee’s investigation shows there are employees of the Tomah VA who were referring to the Tomah VA back then as “Candy Land.” It is crucial we hold those people accountable. But to date, nobody—after multiple deaths caused by the overprescription of opiates, after the death of Thomas Baer, a veteran who basically died of neglect—has been held accountable by being fired, by being terminated.

Again, there is not, from my perspective, any joy in terminating an employee, but for the good of the organization or to honor the promise of the finest among us, that type of accountability is absolutely necessary.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the west coast port slowdown and comments that were made by the administration as they relate to that slowdown, along with legislation I have introduced called the PORTS Act, legislation I hope to pursue during the transportation debate we are going to commence with over the next several days and also as it relates to that west coast port slowdown, the economic impact that slowdown had on our economy.

On June 30 of last year, the labor contract that covered nearly 20,000 workers at 29 west coast ports expired. Port management and the ILWU began negotiations a year before, but in September of 2014 those talks ground to a standstill. Instead of remaining at the table and trying to find a solution and negotiating in good faith, both parties decided to begin jockeying for leverage.

The longshoremen purposefully slowed down their work and drastically decreased productivity while still taking home a full day’s pay. In the real world, employees can’t show up at work and not do their work or slow it down dramatically, not have the productivity they are expected to, and still get everything they want, but in the back worlds of labor union politics at the ports, that is business as usual. And business has been good at the ports.

According to employer data, a full-time longshoreman earns about \$130,000 a year, full-time employment \$130,000 a year, while foremen earn about \$210,000. That is a pretty good paycheck, and the contract raises these wages even higher.

Workers pay nothing for health coverage that includes no premiums and \$1 prescriptions. Providing this health care costs employers about \$35,000 per employee per year. They are also eligible for a maximum pension of over \$80,000 per year upon retirement, so \$130,000 salary for a longshoreman, \$210,000 if you are a foreman, \$35,000 for health benefits, and \$80,000 per year worth of pension upon retirement.

But what happened for the rest of us this past year when the slowdown occurred on the 29 west coast ports, the

effect of the slowdowns weren’t just limited to the port owners. When the longshoremen decided to slow down their work, the goods flowing through these ports backed up and international trade ground to a halt.

This has had devastating economic impacts in States far beyond the west coast and around the Nation as a whole. Nine excruciating months after the labor contract expired, the parties finally reached a deal but not before costing U.S. businesses and consumers billions upon billions of dollars and ruining the credibility of our exporters abroad.

When it comes to the administration, though, the response was pretty alarming as well. Labor Secretary Perez was just asked about this economic disaster of the west coast ports slowdown when visiting the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. His response: “The collective bargaining process worked.”

As a result of the west coast port slowdown, the administration’s response was: “The collective bargaining process worked.”

The Labor Secretary made these comments while visiting Los Angeles, Long Beach, the two busiest ports of the country. So let’s take a look at what the collective bargaining process did at those ports. This is a ship finder map of Los Angeles and Long Beach showing ships anchored offshore this week. This is recent data. These are ships that are anchored off the shore of Los Angeles and Long Beach just this past week. This is what it looks like when the ports are operating and functioning normally.

You will notice there is a lot of blue ocean and not many ships anchored offshore. Ships can quickly unload imported products and load American-made exports for distribution around the world. There is no backup, no congestion, and no disruption to our country’s economy.

But this is what Los Angeles and Long Beach—the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach—looked like during the slowdown during the crisis. Dozens upon dozens of ships anchored and idled waiting for ships in port to be unloaded.

You can see all the ships that are backed up compared to the previous chart. The Journal of Commerce reported that there were 32 ships anchored off the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach at one point during the slowdown. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the need for a long-term surface transportation bill that invests in 21st century infrastructure, but just take a look at the kind of dysfunction antiquated labor laws can cause.

This is an aerial shot. You can see this is off the wing of an airplane where you can see all of the ships that are backed up waiting at these ports to be unloaded, ships that carry the goods for our economy, the goods that make our economy run. Congestion like this is a nightmare for American farmers, businesses, and consumers.

Farm exporters were charged exorbitant fees for warehouse space to store their agricultural goods as they rotted and spoiled. Meat and poultry companies alone faced port charges in excess of \$30 million per week. So if people were earning \$130,000 a year and not doing their work unloading ships, American farmers, poultry, and meat producers were charged \$30 million per week. Businesses further up the supply chain were also affected.

One large U.S. base manufacturer has calculated the cost of lost sales, warehouse space, additional inventory, and transportation at \$100 million in total as a result of the delays at the west coast ports. Those are just the direct costs.

American businesses also lost credibility and future customers as the foreign buyers turned to other nations for more stable supplies.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that the west coast port delays forced layoffs and downsizing in the U.S. leather industry. Chinese tanners are now turning to European and Brazilian producers to fill their orders. This is a \$3 billion industry that had to lay off workers because of the dispute of the west coast ports.

Apparently, the administration again thinks the process worked just as it was supposed to work. Efficient trade through U.S. ports is critical to maintaining and growing economic opportunity in States across this country. According to the American Association of Port Authorities, U.S. ports support 23 million jobs, and the value of related economic activity accounts for 26 percent of our national GDP. Twenty-six percent of our national GDP comes from our ports system. Contract negotiations related to labor disputes at our ports clog up these vital arteries and cause problems throughout our national supply chain.

If you need further proof of whether this impacted our economy—that picture we just saw of all the ships stacked up at L.A. and the ports in California—according to Federal Reserve economists, the disruptions on the west coast were great enough to affect the entire economic output of the country.

This chart shows the quarterly change in national GDP. Once negotiations stalled, you will notice GDP growth started to decline. So here we are in the third quarter of 2014. Remember, we started talking about September of 2014, when the slowdowns really started. By the time we get to the last quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015, you can see the labor dispute contributing to the decline of our national GDP. Our economy shrank as a result of port slowdown.

In the first quarter of this year, when the slowdowns were in full swing, the economy actually shrank by 0.2 percent. You can see it, in the third quarter—this is the last quarter—to the first quarter of this year. Twenty-six percent of our GDP depends on these ports.

The Fed economists also found that disruptions disproportionately affected exporters sending American-made goods abroad for sale overseas. Exporters didn't have access to imported raw materials and parts they needed to build their products. This caused supply chains to back up and eventually reduced output and employment.

So the Fed is telling us that the collective bargaining process at the ports measurably reduced economic growth and American jobs across the country by crippling American businesses, but only in the backward worlds of labor union politics could this economic disaster be considered everything is working just fine. Only in a union-dominated industry could this catastrophe be considered a success.

That is why I have introduced the PORTS Act. Our legislation would discourage disruptions at U.S. ports and incentivize speedy resolution of disputes by strengthening and expanding the well-known Taft-Hartley process.

Over 100 national agricultural, manufacturing, and retail organizations support the PORTS Act because they are fed up with the status quo. They disagree with the administration, which thinks shrinking our economy is everything working just fine.

There are some who oppose the PORTS Act, and those are the labor unions. In fact, earlier this month, the AFL-CIO put out a statement saying legislation like the PORTS Act was not needed. You can see what has happened without the PORTS Act is economic decline, people being laid off, farmers losing millions of dollars, products rotting in warehouses because of the backups.

In just 5 years—5 years from now—the labor contracts on both the east coast and the west coast will expire. Imagine what would happen if we had labor disputes occurring on the west coast and the east coast at the same time, people who were willing to threaten that 26 percent of our national GDP over a dispute, while the administration says everything is working just fine. It is critical we have the necessary tools in place to prevent another debilitating crisis.

If we learned anything from this past dispute, it is that Labor Secretary Perez is wrong—the current process does not work. And the AFL-CIO is wrong—legislation like the PORTS Act is desperately needed.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to join me in supporting this important legislation. Let us not pinch our economy in an economic vice from the east and the west. Let's find economic opportunity to grow our Nation together.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, regular order would have produced a vote on the motion to proceed at 2 a.m. tonight. For the information of all Senators, that vote will actually occur at 9 a.m. tomorrow. So there will be no further votes tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, Senator MURKOWSKI and I released a bipartisan energy bill. We hope to mark up that bill next week, but critical to that Energy bill is the modernization of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Forty years ago, we created the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to prevent economic distress caused by oil disruption. People remember exactly what happened with the Arab oil embargo in 1973. The law that created the SPRO—the Energy Policy Conservation Act—was enacted in 1975 specifically to help protect the U.S. economy from energy disruptions.

The core policy reason for having the reserve really hasn't changed, nor should it. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is an important asset to our energy security. We need it as much today as we did then. Perhaps even more so now that we have so much volatility.

Clearly, we have seen dramatic changes in our energy policy landscape. Instead of importing a lot of oil, we have become a bigger producer in the United States, and our oil infrastructure and refining capacity has reduced our ability to make sure SPR is available in case of an emergency.

In fact, the Department of Energy did a test sale in 2014 and identified a series of challenges associated with the way the SPR distribution works today. That is why I think it is so important. These very supplies that make us more secure in one respect are also stressing our national infrastructure and may actually lessen our ability to respond in an emergency. That is why it is so important to modernize the SPRO, to use the resources we have there, to make sure we make investments.

Some may have seen the Quadrennial Energy Review recently produced and released. Its key findings—I am now reading from the report—show that multiple factors affect U.S. energy security. These include U.S. oil demand, the level of oil imports, the adequacy of emergency response systems, fuel inventory levels, fuel substitution capacity, energy system resilience, and the flexibility, transparency, and competitiveness of the global energy marketplace.

The report goes on to say the United States is the world's largest producer of petroleum and natural gas. Combined with new clean energy technologies and improved fuel efficiency, U.S. energy security is stronger than it has been in over half a century.

But the report goes on to say: Nonetheless, challenges remain in maximizing that energy security benefits of our resources in a way that enhances our competitiveness and minimizes our environmental impacts of their use. The network of the oil distribution has changed significantly.

So the Strategic Petroleum Reserve's ability to offset future energy supply disruption has been adversely affected by global domestic and global market development, and so there is a need for an upgrade.

I think people can all agree it needs an upgrade. So that is why we raise a question about a transportation bill on the floor that takes money out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve not to upgrade that energy security need but to put it into highways, which will do nothing to secure us if there is an energy supply disruption.

The report goes on to say the capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to protect the U.S. economy from severe economic harm in the event of a supply emergency associated with spikes has been diminished. It has been diminished.

Changes in U.S. energy production are stressing and transforming the way energy commodities are transported in the United States. Some of these commodities, the report goes on to say, such as coal and ethanol have traditionally relied on rail and barge transport to move these products. These transportation modes, such as rail, barge, and truck transport, are also shared by agriculture and other major commodities and are being joined by significant growth in the use of transport of oil and refined petroleum products.

So it creates a limited infrastructure capacity among these commodities. The report goes on to say that those costs are being increased in shipping and then being passed on to the consumer. So literally, by taking money out of the SPR and not investing it in the modernization of our energy infrastructure and security—we are taking money and building highways—we are making it more expensive for consumers to get products and to secure our economy.

The Department of Agriculture has indicated that disruptions to agricultural shipments—that is, agricultural products that can't get on the rails because we have so much oil, natural gas, coal, and all these other things or just sand for drilling—are basically causing a disruption so big that it is bigger than the disruption to agriculture caused by Katrina.

So we have supply. But the economic challenge of having other products displaced or having the cost to consumers go up is what is threatening us. Even the ability to maintain adequate coal stockpiles at some electric powerplants has been affected by rail congestion. That comes directly from the report. Why is that so important? Because all these energy commodities are impor-

tant to us. These agricultural commodities are important for us.

The quadrennial review calls for an update to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Department of Energy should make infrastructure investments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and its distribution systems to optimize the SPR's ability to protect the U.S. economy in an energy emergency. That is right from the report. The report calls for creating a multimodal freight program to make sure we improve investment in freight and to make sure there is Federal action on shared transportation infrastructure that makes sure we can move our energy products.

It says we have to work on our waterways as well because the waterways are critical to moving our energy products around.

The report goes on to say that the Federal facility that consists of a network of 62 salt caverns at four geographically dispersed storage sites need upgrading. A lot of this is happening in the south of our country, in Louisiana and Texas. We need to make sure our economy does not see another disruption or price spike without our ability to update the SPR and actually get the product out.

The report called on DOE to make a \$2 billion investment to increase the incremental distribution of SPR by adding a dedicated marine loading-dock capacity at a gulf coast terminus—my guess, again, is probably in Texas or Louisiana—and that Congress should update the SPR to be more effective in preventing serious economic hardships to the U.S. energy supply and making sure we optimize our capacity for infrastructure distribution. The report also calls for an additional \$2.5 billion over 10 years to make sure we are making these connectors.

So not only are we required to do this as a country—to make sure that our country is safe and secure and that we take advantage of the product we have—but we are also a member of the International Energy Program. As to members, they make sure every country is doing what they should to make sure there is an increase in supply and that we can withstand anything—a world event, a natural disaster, a hurricane or critical infrastructure destruction by some cyber event or by an actual attack. So the SPR is like a rainy day fund, an account that makes that infrastructure work.

There are two things in particular we should consider when we are thinking about the drawdown of this product that is not specifically tied to an emergency.

First, we should make sure this investment is an upgrade to the SPR's infrastructure and for its emergency capabilities. That is, if we are going to take money out, it should go to infrastructure in responding to emergencies and not just to the highway bill for highways. We need to make sure the SPR's critical systems and equipment,

which are nearing their life-end operational capacity—that in fact there is the \$2 billion that is needed to repair that. I am not even sure you can sell money out of the SPR now onto the marketplace because all of the apparatuses and the functioning capabilities for it don't work correctly now. I know we want to mark up a transportation bill that has this money in here, but we may not even be able to collect on it. Let's make sure we do our repairs.

Secondly, let's make sure the receipts from the SPR sale should be used to improve the critical urgency and energy infrastructure investments that we need.

Now, some of my colleagues talk about how expensive this oil was when we bought it and now what we are selling it for. I could say taxpayers are definitely not getting their fair share. But one way to make sure they get their fair share on this investment is to make sure it is invested in the energy security infrastructure that our Nation needs. Now would not be the time to damage our Nation's emergency preparedness by giving this money away in a transportation deal that is only about highways.

I hope, my colleagues, if we are really serious about this effort, if we are going to sell SPR at any price and affect the American taxpayers, that we will follow the recommendations of the Department of Energy's Quadrennial Energy Review that found that many different areas of our energy infrastructure need investing. We could make investments in resiliency, reliability, and security, and focusing on hardening our infrastructure, particularly our transportation systems, which are going to be critical for how we move this product around in the future, and, also so that we have port connectors, which are challenged by the movement of critical freight in critical freight corridors.

We want our country to continue to be self-reliant and to have the great products we are exporting through our ports, but they too need the infrastructure investment. Multiple commodities are competing, and they can't even get on the tracks or through our port corridors without making further investment.

I believe the Secretary of Energy needs the flexibility to manage the SPR and the SPR assets. I believe, if the Secretary of Energy or the President of the United States thought it was such a great idea to sell money out of the SPR for highways only, we would hear them saying so. We don't.

I think we need to provide the Secretary with the dependability to make these decisions about our energy security and make the right investments for our future. I hope we can get this right before this bill is done here in the Senate. Otherwise, we will not be doing ourselves any favor when it comes to energy or energy security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

(The remarks of Mr. BLUMENTHAL pertaining to the introduction of S. 1856 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, July 26, 2015, marks the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I would like to take a moment to discuss the importance of this landmark legislation and to highlight the strides we have made in making our communities more inclusive.

It is estimated that nearly one in five Americans have a disability. Upon its passage, the ADA was hailed as the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. It established a clear national mandate that we as a nation have a moral responsibility to ensure that all Americans have access to the programs and the support needed to contribute to society, live with dignity, and achieve a high quality of life. Over the past 25 years, the ADA has expanded opportunities for Americans with disabilities by reducing barriers and changing perceptions and increasing full participation in all areas of public life, including the workforce, education, and transportation. Because of this legislation, we have made tremendous progress in eliminating barriers to everyday life for Americans living with disabilities.

Unfortunately, even after 25 years, we still live in a world where people with disabilities have fewer work opportunities and higher rates of unemployment than people without disabilities. We still have more work to do to ensure that the basic civil rights of persons with disabilities are fully protected and respected, but the ADA was an important step forward in achieving these goals.

Through passage of the ADA, we have made more progress on this issue than anyone ever dreamed of 25 years ago. We should be proud of these efforts to

make our communities more inclusive, and we should honor this important anniversary by continuing our efforts to ensure that no person with a disability experiences prejudice, discrimination, or barriers to living full and productive lives.

REMEMBERING TROY ELAM

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I wish to honor the life of Troy B. Elam, of Middletown, OH, and to recognize his legacy and service to our Nation.

Troy was born in Knox County, KY, on May 31, 1926. He was the son of John Nathan Elam and Alice (Clouse) Elam and passed away on July 17, 2015.

Part of our "greatest generation," Troy Elam served his country valiantly in WWII. A decorated WWII combat veteran, Troy Elam was awarded two Bronze Stars for service on the front lines as part of a U.S. Army machine gun squad in the Battle of the Bulge and the Battle of Remagen. His unit liberated a Nazi concentration camp and Troy was proud to be part of the honor guard 21-gun salute for a Dutch soldier who died after being liberated.

In addition to being a WWII veteran, he was a longtime and dedicated mechanic at the Portman Equipment Company. Troy raised his family in Middletown, OH, and is survived by his wife of 71 years, Dorothy Mae (Helton) Elam, his children Diane McCowan, Troy D. Elam, Don Elam, and Jerry Elam, 9 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren.

Troy Elam was an American hero. He will be missed, but his legacy will not be forgotten.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

SAMUEL SHAPIRO & COMPANY 100TH ANNIVERSARY

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to Samuel Shapiro & Company, a Baltimore-based customs broker and freight forwarder, on the occasion of the firm's 100th anniversary. Founded by Samuel Shapiro in 1915, Shapiro & Co. has since become one of our country's leaders in domestic and international shipping, with locations across the eastern seaboard.

From navigating the intricacies of international cargo management to providing client consultation on import and export compliance, Shapiro & Co. has distinguished itself as a center of innovation, extensive business acumen, and creativity. Strong family and community ties lie at the real heart of the company, which has been family-owned since its founding.

Samuel Shapiro, a son of Russian immigrants, founded Samuel Shapiro & Company at age 20 just as our Nation was beginning to emerge onto the global stage, economically, politically, and socially. Our European allies were in the midst of war, driving the need for American-made goods ever higher. Des-

ignated by the U.S. Government as the Port of Baltimore's distribution broker for grain exports, Shapiro & Co., though small, began to build a reputation for effectiveness and reliability among European businesses during the postwar reconstruction period. Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Shapiro & Co. continued to expand, helping to cement the city of Baltimore as one of the Nation's premier commercial ports.

In the 1950s, Shapiro & Co., driven by the strong leadership of Samuel and his son Sigmund, emerged as an influential force in lobbying for the establishment of the Maryland Port Authority in 1956 and in advocating for the growth of the port, supporting the construction of the Dundalk Marine Terminal in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Shapiro & Co. continued to serve as an economic force through some of Baltimore's most difficult times, throughout the eras of upheaval and relocation in the 1960s and 1970s.

After a lifetime of devotion to the city of Baltimore, Samuel Shapiro passed away at the age of 92 in the mid-1980s. Today, the company is headed by president and CEO Marjorie Shapiro, Samuel's granddaughter. Shapiro, as the company is known today, has evolved from a one-room office with a \$5 roll-top desk to a well-respected and highly regarded industry leader and Baltimore institution. The Port of Baltimore is more vibrant than ever, due in part to the stewardship of Shapiro & Co. In 2014, the Port brought in 29.5 million tons of foreign exports at a value of \$52.5 billion. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the legacy of this outstanding company, which embodies the values that we honor most as Americans: hard work, a commitment to family, and tireless dedication.●

TRIBUTE TO LESLEY ROBINSON

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Lesley Robinson, the newly elected member of the Executive Committee of the National Association of Counties, NACo, as Montanan of the Week. Mrs. Robinson was recognized during NACo's 80th Annual Conference and will now act as the regional representative for the western region of the United States. Mrs. Robinson will also serve as vice chair of NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee, which oversees all matters pertaining to federally-owned public lands.

As a rancher from Dodson, MT, Mrs. Robinson understands the western lifestyle and hopes to protect the interests of Montana and other western counties while working on the executive committee. Mrs. Robinson wants to highlight issues regarding resource management, endangered species protection, and wildfire prevention.

Beyond her work at NACo, Mrs. Robinson is also an active member of her community. She works with local organizations like the Bear Paw Development Corporation, Phillco Economic