thinking and courageousness saved lives when they crawled across the movie theater floor to pull the fire alarm to alert authorities.

Lafayette and Louisiana are resilient. In times of tragedy and pain, we come together to support and care for one another. The love we have for each other, even in the darkest of times, will help Lafayette, our State, and our community recover.

The events that transpired in Lafayette last week are a reminder of the long road we must take to reform our mental health system. Too many innocent lives are being taken from us in senseless attacks in movie theaters, schools, churches, and other places where we should feel safe. The common denominator in these tragedies is all too often untreated mental illness.

As public servants, we should seek to keep the public safe, but our mental health system is badly broken and fails to do so, and reforms are coming too slowly. It doesn't make sense that parents caring for a mentally ill child cannot be part of medical decisionmaking that could prevent horrendous tragedies like these. I can go down the list of reforms that need to be made to improve our mental health system. I am working with my good friend Senator CHRIS MURPHY on legislation that will help reform our mental health system and make it easier for those in need to get the help that could potentially avert a future tragedy like this.

I finish by saying once more that our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of Jillian and Mayci and all those wounded who are suffering. May they know God's comfort at a time when it may be otherwise impossible for them to feel comforted.

I yield to my fellow Senator and good friend, Senator VITTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I come to the Senate floor sadly, in light of this tragedy, to join my colleague Senator CASSIDY in expressing these heartfelt thoughts. We rise today to express our deepest sympathy for the victims of this horrible shooting in Lafayette. The hearts of all of Lafayette and Louisiana go out to all of the families involved in this tragic incident.

As Senator CASSIDY suggested, we lost two enormously talented, unique, and irreplaceable individuals, and we certainly pay tribute to them.

As Senator CASSIDY suggested, Mayci was a student at Louisiana State University, full of life, full of hope, full of promise. She was studying to become an ultrasound and radiology technician. She was scheduled to begin her training just a few days after her tragic death. She was at the movies with her boyfriend, Matthew Rodriguez, who was among the nine wounded.

Jillian was the owner of Parish Ink, a T-shirt printing company specializing in old Acadiana verities. She and her husband also owned the Red Arrow Workshop, a gift and toy shop in Lafayette. She also was full of life, full of talent, full of vigor and happiness. She played the ukulele and guitar for The Figs, an all-female sextet from Lafayette.

These are two individuals who are completely irreplaceable, and they will be sorely missed.

I also join Senator CASSIDY in recognizing and thanking the heroic actions of those two teachers from Jeanerette High School in Iberia Parish, Jena Meaux and Ali Martin. According to several reports, Ali jumped in front of Jena to shield her from the shooting, very likely saving her life; it caused the bullet to hit Jena's leg instead of Ali's head. Ali was shot in the leg in the process. Despite her injuries, Jena courageously pulled the fire alarm, alerting the whole movie theater and certainly saving lives. So we pay tribute and remember them as well.

We also pause and remember and continue praying for the recovery of nine other individuals who were wounded in that horrible incident: I mentioned Matthew Rodriguez, the boyfriend of Mayci Breaux; Morgan Julia Egedahl; Dwight ''Bo'' Ramsey and his wife Gerry—cousins of Congressman BOUSTANY, by the way, and good friends of mine and Senator CASSIDY's; Ali Viator Martin, an English teacher at Jeanerette Senior High School, and Jena Legnon Meaux, whom I mentioned as true heroes in this incident.

On Saturday evening, Lafayette residents gathered downtown to honor particularly the two victims who lost their lives. During the vigil, one Lafayette resident certainly stated it well:

> We can't let evil win. We as a community have to rise above that and move forward.

Well, we do, but as we do, Senator CASSIDY and I rise today to honor the victims, to remember them—particularly Mayci and Jillian—and to certainly recommit ourselves to the important work at hand, including regarding mental illness, as Senator CASSIDY suggested.

We have prepared a Senate resolution commemorating the victims of this horrible event.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 231, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

> A resolution (S. Res. 231) honoring the memory and legacy of the two Louisiana citizens who lost their lives, recognizing the heroism of first responders and those on the scene, and condemning the attack of July 23, 2015, in Lafayette, Louisiana.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 231) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, again, we all hold these families, particularly the two victims and their families, in our prayers and our continuing thoughts and our love. It was a horrible incident. But I know the community of Lafayette well, I know the State well, and it certainly will not stop with the pure tragedy. Certainly folks will hold up these families in love and support and prayer and work toward far better resolution of issues involved, as the one Senator CASSIDY mentioned.

I yield the floor.

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

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

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015—Continued

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I see there is kind of a lull here. We are waiting around for a vote to take place at 10 or 10:30 tonight, I think it is, and I thought I would share.

There are still some uncertainties on the bill, the Transportation reauthorization bill. It is one I am very proud to be the author of. In fact, I was privileged to be the author the last long-term reauthorization in 2005. At that time, I was working very closely with someone, with a fellow Member who is the least likely to be working with me on anything. By her own admission, Senator BOXER is a very proud liberal and I am a very proud conservative, but we do agree there is that old, worn-out document that nobody reads anymore called the Constitution, and it tells us what we are supposed to be doing here. It says, defend America and build our roads and bridges. That is what we are doing. That is what this is all about.

We received a disturbing message from the House about an hour ago saying they would not take up our bill. We are going to pass this bill, but they say they are not going to take it up. That means there is a dilemma because at the end of this month, there is no longer any money in the highway trust fund, and things will stop.

I don't know whether their intention is to give a short-term extension and go home or—of course, I am still thinking brighter minds will prevail and they will realize we have a long-term, 6-year highway authorization bill because the things you can't do in this country, you can't do with the short-term extensions.

Yesterday, I listed many of the bridges that were in terrible shape and the fact that we could not address those problems unless we pass a long-term highway reauthorization bill. I mentioned also that someone I knew—it was right around the 2005 bill—a mother and three children were driving under a bridge in Oklahoma City. It was far out of its extended life, its warranty period, if you will, and a chunk of concrete fell off and killed her. This is happening all over America. We saw what happened in Minnesota when that disaster occurred, all the pictures of the people who died and were injured.

We are going to be looking at a lot of amendments. I heard there is one amendment that Senator MANCHIN along with Senator BOOZMAN are putting together to adopt the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2, which is appropriate. It may not be as germane as we would like it to be, but it is still transportation.

The Pilot's Bill of Rights 1 was passed 2 years ago. In fact, they would not even take it up in committee, but I had 67 cosponsors to the bill. I was very thankful at that time. Of course, the Democrats were in the majority. I went to HARRY REID's office and said: It doesn't seem fair to me that we have 67 cosponsors, and they will not even take it up in the committee.

He said: Well, that isn't right.

We came down to the floor, we rule XIV'd it, and passed it. It does show that sometimes when things get really outrageous, people tend to work together. That was on an issue that just a handful of people are aware of, but anyone who is a licensed pilot knows, in their minds, that was the most significant thing that was going on.

I have been flying for a lot more years than most people in this Chamber have been alive. Because I have been an active pilot—I have been in aviation for many years—the people who have problems with the FAA would come to me to help them with their problems. I found this to be true back when I was mayor of Tulsa. We had a police force, a very good police force. There are a few bad guys who get in there. The same thing is true with the FAA. You have a few people who take advantage of the power they have and take licenses away from people.

I remember 10 years ago, Bob Hoover—I bet none of you ever heard of Bob Hoover. Bob Hoover was arguably the best pilot in the history of aviation. He had a Shrike. A Shrike is a twin-engine Aero Commander. He would put a glass of water on the dash, and he would start doing barrel rolls and would not spill his glass of water. I would do barrel rolls, but I would spill my glass of water. This guy was really good.

There was an inspection in the field, and Bob Hoover lost his pilot's license. There was no reason for it. In order to get it back, I actually had to go to the floor, and it took a year to pass legislation that would stop that abuse from going on. That has continued. I have always helped people until it happened to me, and then that had a whole new feeling because people who are involved in aviation—the one thing they don't want to lose is their pilot's license.

For many years, I was a builder and developer in South Padre Island, TX. We are on the east coast now. Nobody knows where Texas is here. They think there is no such thing as a nice coast with beaches and all of that unless it is on the east coast, but there is the Padre Island area of Texas. It has beautiful beaches.

I was in the building business. We built condos and townhouses, and I always enjoyed that. Keep in mind this is the southern tip of Texas. It is just as far south as Key West, FL, is, but it is in the middle of the country. We would go down there. I would fly my plane probably once a week for quite a number of years. I went down, and I was making a normal landing. It is not a controlled field. You have your approach controls that control it. The approach control from valley approach—I am getting a little technical here, but I have a reason for telling this story.

He said: All right, you are clear to land on runway 1–3 in Cameron County. I went up to land. Just before I touched down, with six passengers—so it was too late for a go-around—I saw that there were a bunch of people working on the runway. There wasn't a big X on the runway, which is required. They claimed there was. They quickly painted one on right after that.

Everyone started criticizing me. I remember there was a front-page cartoon in the New York Times. Everyone was having a good time with that. The bottom line is, I didn't do anything. They claimed there was a NOTAM. That is short for Notice to Airmen. The Notice to Airmen says that if you check your notice before you land on the field, you will find out if there is construction on the runway, if lights are out or something else. Of course, we did that. There was no NOTAM. They claimed there was a NOTAM—the FAA did. They never could find it.

Anyway, to bring us up-to-date, I introduced and we passed the Pilot's Bill of Rights. In our system, our legal holdout was where you are guilty until you are proven innocent if you are a pilot. That is the last—because one man's accusation can turn into the revocation of a license, so we introduced the Pilot's Bill of Rights. We gave an opportunity, if they disagree with the FAA, if an accusation is made—or the NTSB—they can go to the Federal district court. That seemed to work out.

The bill forced the FAA to put NOTAMs in one secure place where everybody would have access to it, and all of these complaints that were made were dealt with, but a lot of the things we wanted to happen wouldn't happen.

In case you are wondering—I will take it off now since there is no reason to keep it on. Do you know what that is? That is the pass to get into Oshkosh. The Chair knows this because the Chair's husband has an FBO operation in Western Iowa. Anyway, I have gone to the largest aviation event worldwide in Oshkosh. It is the last weekend of July of every year. I have been to every one of those, along with my sons, for 36 years. I never missed one. I didn't miss one last week either. Some things are really important.

I went there with the idea that we have the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2 in order to correct the areas where the FAA is either not complying with the intent of the law or even the Federal district courts are not accepting cases. We are going to correct that.

First of all, if it happens that Senator MANCHIN and Senator BOOZMAN offer their amendments, then I will be supporting their amendments. I am going to go over why it is important, but if as a result of the announcement that was made by the House of Representatives 2 hours ago we are not going to be having amendments, it is still introduced as a freestanding bill. I have 56 cosponsors. That is a lot of cosponsors. If that happens, I want to mention a couple of things that are on here.

There is a problem with the third-class medical. So 10 years ago, a decision was made, and it was a good decision. They took the light aircraft, and they said if you can drive a car, you can fly an airplane. They went ahead, and we have had 10 years' experience now without a third-class medical certificate. There has not been one accident in 10 years where it was due to the fact that they didn't have any third-class medical certificates.

In this bill, we are taking that up to include a larger number of pilots, and to include airplanes as heavy as 6,000 pounds, carrying six passengers, not exceeding 250 knots, and several requirements like that in giving them the same opportunities the pilots of the light aircraft have. That is a part of this bill. I know there are a lot of people in this Chamber because I have talked with them, not a whole lot because we have 56 cosponsors, but there are a lot of them who really believe that would somehow be dangerous. For that purpose, we have made several exceptions to it. I will outline these because I know there are some Members of this body that if this comes up as an amendment, they need to know this.

First of all, on a third-class medical, we have the requirement for an online medical education course every 2 years. This will make sure the pilots coming up for renewal of their certificate are up-to-date on all of the new things that have transpired since the last time in the new medical requirements.

The second thing it does is anyone who is a new pilot just coming on, he has to have a thorough examination that now you have to have every couple of years. That hasn't changed.

And then the third would be the self-certification that takes place every 5 years, which could actually be done with your own doctor. Those are some of the changes that have been made to make it a little bit easier for some Senators who will be voting on this legislation.

The second area where the Pilot's Bill of Rights did not—they addressed it, but there are two Federal judges. You are supposed to be able to go from the FAA to the NTSB, the National Transportation Safety Board, and then to the Federal District Court. What has happened in the past is that the NTSB has rubberstamped anything the FAA does, so really the FAA is making those decisions without proper due course which other people are entitled to.

What we have done with this is—there are a couple of Federal judges who said they are not going to take a case on a pilot until they have exhausted all of the administrative remedies that come from the FAA and the NTSB. We have a solution to that in this bill so this actually explicitly states the pilots will have an option to appeal the FAA enforcement action directly to the Federal courts for a guaranteed de novo trial. De novo means, instead of taking the conclusions of the investigation from the FAA and risking rubber stamping it, they have to have a trial from the beginning. That is a very significant change we are making.

The other thing we neglected to do is include certificate holders other than pilots. You could be a mechanic, a flight attendant, or any number of things, and not be included in these legal opportunities, so the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2 allows all certificate holders to have this.

The third area is the access to the flight records. In my case, I could not get access as to what the FAA was accusing me of. We thought we had this corrected in the Pilot's Bill of Rights, but it still needs to be strengthened, so we have a section in the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2 that requires the FAA to notify a certificate holder that he is being investigated and clarify the incident being used to begin enforcement proceedings so that person will know what he has been accused of and can address it.

The fourth area has to do with document requests. The FAA has retaliated against pilots because the Pilot's Bill of Rights 1 requested broad documents from them, which can be very time consuming and very costly, and it is not necessary at all. The solution to that is that we explicitly rein in the ability of the FAA to initiate the expansive document request and limit them to the pertinent issues being investigated by the FAA. That should correct that.

We have several other items too. If somebody has a minor infraction in a car, then after 90 days, or so many days, it would be taken from their record. That is the way it used to be prior to 1996 when they had the Pilot Records Improvement Act of 1996, and now we will go back to where we were before that.

Many of these issues that were problems before and weren't corrected with the Pilot Bill of Rights are corrected, and I feel very comfortable with it.

The reason I have all of this in my mind now is that I just came back from Oshkosh. Although I was there only 2 days, I was able to give 10 presentations, and there were a little less than a half-million pilots there at the time, so I am sure I got to all half-million of those pilots collectively with all of those events that we had.

It is kind of interesting because for someone who is a pilot, that is the most important thing. We are not talking about Democrats, Republicans, or things that are controversial. It is just that when you go to Oshkosh and you see what people have accomplished through experimentation and the technology that has developed—it used to be that all planes had to be made out of aluminum, and this all changed with new types of things that were discovered at Oshkosh. People are building planes behind their garages.

Well, anyway, so much for that. We have a good solution for all of these problems, and I will say to the 56 members that they are certainly very popular among the pilots and the group I spent the last 2 days with.

I mentioned that only because in the event that they change the rules around here, and we are allowed to have amendments that are not germane, that would be one of the amendments that I would offer, and I want to be sure that we are at least getting things into the RECORD so people are aware of it. While there are no Members here right now, the staff is monitoring everything that is going on, so I want to make sure people know that is an issue we may or may not be dealing with.

It would be a surprise to me if the House of Representatives said: Well, we are just going to go home, and we are not going to pass this bill after we go through all of the trouble of passing it. I think there are ample votes to pass this legislation. Long-term reauthorization is a very important thing back in the States.

The coalitions which are coming together on this legislation include the Department of Transportation for every State, along with the labor unions. They are supporting this legislation because it will provide a lot of jobs. The Chambers of Commerce are all involved; the farmers are all involved. This has the most popular support of anything that we will deal with all year long, so we really need to have this bill. I am having a hard time believing that if we go through the trouble of having a reauthorization bill, the House is not going to take it up, but that statement was made 2 hours ago, and that may be the situation.

I can remember in the earlier days when the highway trust fund had one big problem: They always had a surplus. They had too much money, but that has changed with the increased efficiency of cars. Electric vehicles are using highways, but they are not paying the gas tax. Consequently, we have a real problem with funding this legislation.

If we take the total amount of revenues that come from the gas tax, let's say over the next 6 years because this is a 6-year bill, each year falls short by $15 billion. So we are looking at being short $90 billion over a 6-year period.

I can say this because I think I may be ranked as the most conservative Member for a longer period of time than anybody else in the Senate. I can talk about this because this is a conservative position. The conservative position is to have a long-term bill because if we do short-term fixes, it costs—and this is irrefutable and no one disagrees with this—an additional 30 percent off the top if we do short-term extensions, and that is what we have been doing. We have had 33 short-term extensions since the 2005 bill that we passed expired in 2009, and that has used a very large amount of the money that was there to take care of the problems with the roads and the highways.

We do have problems out there, and it is going to take a long-term bill to take care of it. I have a feeling, since the money runs out on the last day of this month, that the House, if they are not going to take up our bill, they may just pass a short-term extension and then go home. That is not the way I think it should be done, we have to get this long-term bill.

This is something that doesn't happen very often, but now and then it does. We went through the same thing with the other big bill, which was the Defense authorization bill over the last 3 or 4 years, and they didn't bring it up as they should have early in the year. I remember 2 years ago we passed our Defense authorization bill in June, and the leadership didn't bring it up until December. If we hadn't brought it up, then the kids who are out there risking their lives would lose their reenlistment bonuses, their hazard pay, and a lot of things would have happened. Just before the end of December, we were able to get it done. It is not the way things are supposed to be done around here. I certainly don't want that done with the highway reauthorization bill, but that is what very likely could happen if the House does what they say they are going to do.

With that, I do want to come back and go over some of the larger problems that cannot be addressed unless we pass a long-term highway reauthorization bill.

I will say this: There is a very fine FBO operation in Western Iowa called Red Oak. It just so happens that my son just left Red Oak on his way back from Oshkosh. It also happens that Red Oak is owned by the husband of a very prominent Senator in this body who happens to be presiding now.

With that, I will come back later, and we will be talking about these things because I understand the next thing we are going to do is a vote at 10 tonight, unless some time is yielded back. I hope they will yield back their time. They are not down here talking, so there is no reason not to yield back time. If time is not yielded back, I will talk about some of the projects that will not be done unless we have a long-term reauthorization bill.

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

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

HONORING MARINE SERGEANT CARSON HOLMQUIST

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I come to the floor to pay tribute to one of America's sons who has fallen in the line of duty. Sgt Carson Holmquist was a 25-year-old marine from Grantsburg, WI, who lost his life tragically as a result of the heinous act committed by a terrorist on July 16 in Chattanooga.

Sergeant Holmquist was one of the finest among us. He gave his life to preserve the liberties upon which America was founded. He was a son, a husband, a father, and a very proud marine.

He also must have been a great friend to all the people he knew and a man who was respected by many people he didn't know.

I was honored to attend his funeral this past Saturday, and I was witness to a tremendous outpouring of support. I saw a line—probably about 2 blocks long, three or four people wide—of citizens from all across Wisconsin and from several other States.

Some of these people were Sergeant Holmquist's relatives, some were his friends, many were brothers-in-arms, both past and present. Still others were citizens who had no personal connection to Sergeant Holmquist. They came simply to pay their respects to a man who swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

They came to honor a man who so loved America that he chose to serve in faraway lands. He revered freedom, so he sacrificed his own freedom that we may be free. He defended our right to live as individuals by yielding his own individuality in that noble cause. He valued life. Yet he bravely readied himself to lay down his own life in humble service to his comrades-in-arms, to his family, and to his Nation.

For 239 years, our service men and women have served as guardians of our freedom. The cost of that vigilance has been high. Since the Revolutionary War, more than 42 million men and women have served in our military, and more than 1 million of those selfless heroes have given their lives. Wisconsin has borne its share of that sacrifice. Since statehood, more than 27,000 of Wisconsin's sons and daughters have died in military service. Statistics cannot possibly convey the weight of these losses. Statistics are merely numbers that could never fully communicate the qualities of promising lives which were cut far too short. Statistics say nothing of unfulfilled hopes and dreams.

So instead of numbers such as 1 million or 27,000, I ask everyone to think for a moment about a much smaller but yet even more staggering number—simply the number one. Sergeant Holmquist was one man, loved and cherished by family and friends. He was one man whose loss is a tremendous blow to Wisconsin and to this great Nation.

He was one man, but his sacrifice was not his alone. His parents Thomas and LaBrenda, his wife Jasmine, his son Wyatt, and every other relative and friend left behind are experiencing profound loss and grief. But tragedy multiplies. It is not contained. For those left behind, the pain may slowly subside, but the wound will never heal.

The Holmquist family loved Carson dearly, and our hearts go out to them. I pray they will find peace and comfort amid overwhelming tragic loss.

The torch of freedom burns brightly because of men like Sergeant Holmquist. May God bless and comfort the sergeant's loved ones. May He watch over those who have answered the Nation's call. May God bless America.

I yield the floor.

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

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

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise because I am deeply and profoundly disappointed in this year's ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' that was released today. By upgrading Malaysia and Cuba, which were at tier 3—the worst tier at which any country could be considered—the administration has turned its back on the victims of trafficking and turned a blind eye to the facts and politicized the report, and they completely ignored the calls from Congress, from leading human rights advocates, from the realities on the ground in Cuba, and from Malaysian Government officials themselves to preserve the integrity of this exceedingly important report. They have succeeded in elevating political considerations and political goals above the most fundamental principles of basic human rights.

I heard Secretary Kerry, in his presentation of the report, say something to the extent that we should not put a price on our fellow human beings' freedom. Well, it seems we have in this case. In arbitrarily upgrading Malaysia and Cuba, they are clearly politicizing the report, giving an undeserved stamp of approval to countries that have failed to take the basic actions that would merit this upgrade. This flies in the face of what Malaysians themselves want. In Malaysia, members of the Parliament, the legal profession, and human rights activists have urged the United States to support their efforts to maintain the tier 3 ranking they tell us Malaysia deserves. Today we have failed them.

In Cuba, adults and children are subjected to sex trafficking, and the government continues perpetrating abusive practices of forced labor. The administration's decision to upgrade Cuba defies common sense. In the State Department's own words, Cuba is a source country where adults and children—children—are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor.

In the case of forced labor, the Castro regime itself is the single greatest perpetrator of forced labor in Cuba. Every year the Cuban Government coerces tens of thousands of its own doctors and medical professionals to serve in foreign missions under conditions that violate international norm. The Castro regime restricts the movement of its doctors while they are overseas, takes their passports from them, and often prevents family visits. Additionally, the Cuban Government garnishes its doctors' wages by more than 70 percent, using what should be a humanitarian mission as a means to fill its own coffers.

This gross violation of international standards is so bad that the United States has a specific parole program for Cuban doctors who have been subjected to forced labor conditions by the Castro regime. We have our own special parole program for Cuban doctors who have been subjected to forced labor conditions by the Castro regime. Thousands of Cuban doctors have come to the United States as a result.

So at a time when these doctors are being received into the United States on humanitarian parole, we are going to turn a blind eye to the fact that the Castro regime is the sole responsible actor. This raises one question. Is this yet another emerging detail of something that the administration and the Cuban Government have been discussing in recent months, another demand of the Castro regime that the United States had to agree to in the name of normalizing the relations? They are willing to look the other way on human rights in order to normalize relations? As the State Department's own report recognizes, there has been no progress—no progress—on forced labor in Cuba. Given that reality, any upgrade of the country's ranking challenges common sense.

So I intend to use all the tools at my disposal—from hearings, to a call for investigations, to legislation—to challenge these upgrades. The credibility and commitment of the United States to fighting the scourge of modern-day slavery is on the line. We spent an enormous amount of time in this Senate on the legislation Senator CORNYN had, along with others, on modern-day slavery, spent a lot of time on it in the Foreign Relations Committee on which I am privileged to serve under Senator CORKER, who had his own legislation about how we deal with human trafficking in the world—modern-day slavery, as he calls it. So we need to make clear that the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' must not be subjected to political manipulation.

I am utterly dismayed at the administration's decision to upgrade Malaysia and Cuba under these circumstances. It represents a bastardization of the trafficking-in-persons ranking process and calls into question the credibility of the ''Trafficking in Persons Report,'' and it takes away the power to incentivize real progress. The administration's upgrade of Malaysia as well as Cuba compromises American values in the interest of promoting a trade agenda with a country that has consistently failed to uphold human rights. One can only characterize this action as a cynical maneuver to get around the clear intent of Congress with no regard for the effect on a key measurement tool of a country's human trafficking record. This not only represents the latest release of the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' in the history of its publication—nearly a full 2 months' overdue—but calls into question this administration's commitment to uphold human rights.

We all know that the Malaysian Government has not undertaken a consistent, serious effort that would warrant an upgrade.

As I have noted before on other occasions, on April 17 of this year, the U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia—our Ambassador to Malaysia—said that the Malaysian Government needs to show greater political will in prosecuting human traffickers and protecting their victims if the country hopes to improve on its current lowest ranking in the ''Trafficking In Persons Report.'' This is the person on the ground in Malaysia representing the U.S. Government who has eyes on what is happening, and he said on April 17 that, in fact, the Malaysian Government needs to show greater political will in prosecuting human traffickers and protecting their victims if the country wanted to rise from tier 3 to a better tier 2 standard.

On June 1, the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Migration and Refugees, Anne Richard, reaffirmed that ''this year's report covers up to March 2015, which means Malaysia's handling of the Rohingya refugee crisis will only be reflected in the 2016 report.'' According to the Assistant Secretary, then, actions taken after March of this year, good or bad, should certainly not be reflected in this year's evaluation.

Well, if you are not going to reflect the mass graves of Rohingya Muslims and what the Government of Malaysia did or did not do—the holding pens of humans—because it came after the reporting period, then you can't claim that the government's action to pass a law that has no teeth, no enforcement, and that hasn't even been put into effect after the date—the same date that you say you cannot consider the plight of hundreds who lost their lives—then you can't consider the passage of a hollow bill. It doesn't work both ways.

Even the Malaysian Bar, the Malaysian association of legal professionals, stated in a letter last week: ''If there is any lesson to be learnt from recent experience, it must be that the government has an excellent record of drafting written plans, but a less than satisfactory record of implementing them. As such, the upgrade of Malaysia, if it were to occur, would be premature and undeserved.''

The fact is, by the admission of the ''Trafficking in Persons Report,'' the Malaysian Government had only three human rights convictions in 2014—a two-thirds decrease from the last report. So compared to the last ''Trafficking in Persons Report,'' they had a two-thirds decrease in their convictions of human rights abuses. Yet they get an upgrade. Wow. That is a surefire way to send a message across the world that we are serious about human trafficking. Frankly, that is beyond comprehension and common sense.

There can be no clearer statement nor a more compelling statement that we have lowered the bar on human trafficking and lessened the value of the one report the world relies on to evaluate the behavior of nations. The events of recent months have clearly shown that the Malaysian Government has not even begun to adequately address its human trafficking problem. Thousands of victims continue to be exploited through sex trafficking and forced labor. And it was unnecessary to do this, having passed an amendment that said tier 3 countries in the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' of the State Department would not be allowed preferential access to the U.S. market unless they cleaned up their record, which had strong bipartisan support of the members of the Senate Finance Committee and ultimately was incorporated in the TPA, the trade promotion authority legislation that passed the Senate and was sent to the House. In good faith, because of concerns that maybe that would undermine the Trans-Pacific Partnership, in good faith I negotiated an amendment—a provision to change it in the amendment that would have said you could still negotiate with Malaysia, but they had to clean up their act if you concluded that negotiation and they were part of TPP. They had to clean up their act on human trafficking before they got the preferential access to U.S. markets. I thought it was a significant give on my part, considering the vote of the Senate, but it was a good-faith effort. So this wasn't even necessary to do unless you just want to give Malaysia a pass. The goal was to take the full weight of the TPP deal off of the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' process.

Instead of choosing the route we worked out together, requiring the President to testify in writing that Malaysia has taken concrete steps to deal with its very serious human trafficking problem, the administration backed out. I therefore see no reason why the comprehensive ban on fast-track for tier 3 human traffickers should now be amended. I see no reason why my willingness to accommodate should be amended.

This underscores the need for further oversight of the trafficking in persons process, both legislatively and through the noble work of human rights groups here in Washington and out in the field.

I plan to work with my colleagues to advance my amendment to the State authorization bill passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month which requires the State Department to notify Congress of all trafficking in persons upgrades and downgrades 30 days prior to the release of the report.

I am looking forward to speaking to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to see if he, within a very busy schedule because we have all of the Iran nuclear review—but it seems to me this merits a congressional hearing to determine what went on here. If I, for some reason, cannot achieve that, then I may very well turn to the inspector general of the Department to seek a report as to what went on.

Despite the clear will of Congress, this administration has made a mistake and will now have to answer questions as to its ability to objectively evaluate global human trafficking. The hard-working, committed NGOs that labor in the field to fight human trafficking and the countless victims who continue to suffer deserve an honest reflection of American values, not an arbitrary determination based upon expediency in achieving a limited political objective rather than a real solution.

I look forward to working with all of the groups that have been instrumental in shining a light on the continued human rights abuses that take place in Malaysia, in Cuba, and elsewhere, to ensure that the integrity of the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'' is restored.

Thousands and thousands of men, women, and children around the world who are the victims of human trafficking—it is on their behalf that I come to the floor. It is in their interest and in the interest of responsible trade policy that recognizes there can be no reward to nations that ignore those types of trafficking in persons and do nothing to end the scourge of what amounts to modern-day slavery, one of the great moral challenges of our time.

It is for the world's 50 million refugees and displaced people—the largest number since World War II, many of whom are targets of traffickers. Because they are displaced, have nowhere to go, they are preyed upon. We have the largest number since World War II of refugees in the world. It is for the 36 million women and 5 million children around the world subjected to involuntary labor or sexual exploitation. For the victims of these crimes, the term ''modern slavery'' more starkly describes what is happening around the world.

I will continue to fight against human trafficking in all its forms. I intend to fight for the integrity of a report that is a critical tool for us to be able to not only cast the light upon human trafficking in the world but to get countries to understand they must meet this great moral challenge and change the course of events in their country. That is why I come so incredibly upset to the Senate floor on something I never thought would have happened, but it has. We need to change it and change the course of events.

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

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

CYBER SECURITY

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I rise to speak about the Nation's cyber security. Prior to being elected to the Senate, I spent nearly 12 years working at a cloud computing company. This is a company we started from virtually nothing. We took the company public, and we grew to over 1,000 employees. It became a leading cloud computing company in the customer experience sector. I have seen firsthand the opportunities created by advances in technology, but I have also seen the power Big Data holds because our information becomes currency for both companies and for hackers.

These risks are even greater when they impact our children, and as the daddy of four children, I know the importance of maintaining a close relationship between the parents and their children's school. Today, student electronic records are used in schools across the country, and updates can be easily made and can follow a student from one school to another. This more accurately reflects the nature of students' movements within the school system.

But at a time when overseas hackers are fighting to gain access to any information they can, these technological gains also come with some risks. Securing students' digital information is critical to ensuring that our kids' privacy is protected. That is why I am grateful and proud to announce that I joined Senator BLUMENTHAL in introducing the SAFE KIDS Act.

The Safeguarding American Families from Exposure by Keeping Information and Data Secure—the SAFE KIDS Act—protects student privacy by establishing clear parameters for third-party operators when using data collected from students. This bipartisan legislation empowers parents to control access to their children's information because keeping personally identifiable information secure will lead to a uniform way to secure our students' data. By placing that power back in the hands of the students, in the hands of the parents, and in the hands of the schools, we can make progress toward protecting the privacy of our children because our schools and our kids aren't the only ones at risk for a serious breach.

This week we are debating ways to provide the certainty and resources needed to improve our Nation's infrastructure—our roads, our bridges, our ports, our highways—but recent news reminds us that we must also consider the security of the cars that are driving on our roadways. In fact, just in the past week, news broke that Fiat Chrysler announced a recall of 1.4 million vehicles due to a vulnerability that could allow hackers to disable the vehicles on the highways. In fact, through the radio of a Jeep Cherokee, hackers disabled the vehicle's transmission as a driver drove onto a public highway in St. Louis. This episode is telling in that cyber hacks can affect every sector of our economy, from the financial sector to our automotive manufacturers.

Our military installations across the globe are also vulnerable to an attack, according to a new report from the GAO. In fact, our utility systems that provide water, electricity, and other essential services to our military installations worldwide have limited defenses against cyber attacks. Report details that the industrial control system—ICS—the computers that monitor or operate physical utility infrastructure, ''have very little in the way of security controls and cybersecurity measures in place.'' In fact, in a recent July 25 Military Times article, they cite: ''An example of a successful cyber-physical attack through an ICS was the 'Stuxnet.' '' It was a computer virus that was used to attack Iranian centrifuges in 2010. By hacking the Iranian nuclear facility's ICS, the centrifuges were made to operate incorrectly, causing extensive damage.

The fears of a massive cyber security breach don't only rest in the Pentagon. Just yesterday, Attorney General Loretta Lynch said on ABC's ''This Week'' that a cyber attack by the Islamic State is one of the terrorist group's biggest emerging threats to our country. In fact, during the interview, Attorney General Lynch noted that the terrorist group now boasts over 20,000 English language Twitter followers. Our country's most sensitive data can be in the hands of our enemies at the mere click of a button or press of a screen.

As I speak today, we have yet to obtain answers from the Obama administration on the scope and the perpetrators from the massive hack at the Office of Personnel Management. This attack has paralyzed the Obama administration. They haven't put in place any real, meaningful reforms at OPM. I have called for Chief Information Officer Donna Seymour's resignation since June 24. Yet she still remains in her post and we still don't have any concrete answers for the 21 million-plus Federal employees who were victims of this attack.

We must do more. We must act more quickly and more nimbly than those seeking to wage a terror attack on our Nation's cyber security infrastructure.

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. 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 rise to speak about the freight division of the DRIVE Act, the highway transportation bill that is under consideration before us at the moment.

The freight provisions represent the combined efforts of both the Commerce Committee, which I have the honor of chairing, and the Committee on Environment and Public Works. To create this division, we incorporate a number of provisions from legislation offered by Senator CANTWELL, Senator MARKEY, Senator BOOKER, Senator MURRAY, and the administration's GROW AMERICA Act proposal. We worked very hard to incorporate and make this a bipartisan product. We took into consideration suggestions that were made by our colleagues, many of whom serve on the Commerce Committee and some who don't, but we got to a point where we feel as if we had a good product that incorporates the best ideas—not everything, obviously, that everybody wanted but that addressed many of the issues that pertained to our particular part of this legislation.

The language included in the Commerce Committee's freight program also drew from recommendations made by the Department of Transportation's nonpartisan National Freight Advisory Committee—another entity we looked to and consulted with respect to these particular provisions of the bill.

Because of our Nation's vast transportation network, freight can move by rail, it can move by aircraft, it can move by truck, and it can move by ship. It is multimodal. Under the bipartisan legislation before the Senate, freight-planning efforts will be concentrated under the Secretary of

Transportation. This is to reflect the multimodal nature of how goods are transported and to ensure the involvement of various agencies which regulate different forms of transportation is properly coordinated.

Because freight moves from truck to rail to port, freight planning must consider these connections, and it must include the development of a strategy to expand capacity and to increase efficiency to meet growing demand. This is especially true when it comes to focusing infrastructure investment decisions. Growing demand indicates and fuels a growing economy. We need a plan to handle the significant growth of freight traffic we expect in the coming years.

The Department of Transportation notes that, by 2040, our transportation system is projected to haul an additional 9 billion tons of freight. That represents a 45 percent increase over what we move today. As our economy recovers and continues to grow, we will continue to need additional freight infrastructure. The freight network serves our import and export needs and is a critical element of our economic competitiveness.

Bottlenecks and delays have significant economic cost. Freight is, by nature, not just a highway problem. Airports, ports, and railroads connect farms, manufacturing centers, and the markets they serve.

Freight needs are not just urban issues. They are also very important for rural America. Advancing agricultural freight projects is necessary for the economies of many States, so ensuring planning and funding for these projects is also critical. Keeping freight transportation costs low keeps American farmers competitive in the global marketplace.

In the winter of 2014, South Dakota faced significant challenges moving grain from the State due to congestion in the rail network. When the freight couldn't move, farmers weren't getting paid. Commodities faced spoilage due to a lack of available storage space.

Agriculture is the leading driver of South Dakota's economy. Delays and the significant increased costs of moving grain by rail negatively impacted the pocketbooks of many of the farmers in my State. This, in turn, reduced Main Street's bottom line as well.

More recently, the West Coast port slowdowns delayed shipments to and from stores in South Dakota and across the country. Agricultural products for export were delayed, and imports of products from lumber, medical supplies, and automobiles to basic retail goods were delayed. This was an unforced error that harmed our economy for way too many months.

This labor strife underscored the interconnected nature of our transportation system and how vital our freight infrastructure is to each and to every State in this country. In fact, the resulting strife was widely cited as a contributing cause of the U.S. economy actually shrinking in the first quarter of 2015.

Protecting our competitiveness is at the core of this legislation's freight program that was developed between the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee and my colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Planning for and fixing our freight network will create and maintain jobs over the long term. Reducing delays and lowering the price of freight transportation serves the entire supply chain and, ultimately, the American consumer.

That is why the freight division in the DRIVE Act is so important. The bill improves the planning process, engaging States and stakeholders to help plan for future freight needs. States will provide a forward-looking plan to address these freight needs step by step. These plans will develop investment strategies and prioritize projects for funding.

The bill's consolidated strategy that plans for both highway projects and multimodal projects is a significant improvement over what we have today—or the status quo. In addition, the Environment and Public Works Committee developed a highway trust fund formula program that will support critical projects in every State. In the first year alone, the bill provides $450 million of grant funding to assist with these critical investments.

Projects to improve rail grade crossings, port facilities, and connections between freight modes of transportation will have access to these new resources. This will reduce the time and the cost of moving goods.

The Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors noted that the planning and strategy outlined in the bill is ''a significant step forward for multimodal freight planning and policy.'' The American Association of Port Authorities says: ''Elevating a policy for freight within your legislation sends a strong message that freight must continue to be a priority and that planning, funding, and the establishment of a multimodal freight network are critical for the economic growth of our nation.''

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the full statements of these two organizations I just mentioned.

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

[From the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors, July 16, 2015]

GOODS MOVEMENT COALITION APPLAUDS COMMERCE FREIGHT POLICY, CALLS FOR FREIGHT FUNDING

(By Executive Director Elaine Nessle)

WASHINGTON, DC.—Yesterday the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved a six-year transportation bill, the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015, S.1732. Included in the bill is a freight chapter, providing a focus on multimodal freight planning and policy.

The Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015 is a significant step forward for multimodal freight planning and policy. I commend Chairman Thune and the Committee members for developing policy that incorporates the many modes of transportation that move freight. The proposal contains several policy objectives held by the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors, including creation of a multimodal national freight policy and the call for designation of a multimodal national freight network to inform transportation planning and improve investment decision making.

While this proposal is a step in the right direction, dedicated freight funding is necessary to make targeted system improvements. The Coalition has long called for a minimum annual investment of $2 billion in addition to current programs of funding. A freight investment grant program, with multimodal project eligibility that distributes funding on a competitive basis, is needed to make strategic investments. Businesses and agricultural producers rely on our national multimodal freight system to move goods to market and support growth. To remain competitive in the global market place, we must invest in the system that moves our nation's commerce.''

Demonstrating the large number of projects that stand to benefit from a competitive grant approach, CAGTC published in April a booklet titled ''Freight Can't Wait.'' The booklet contains a sampling of significant freight infrastructure projects that could be realized with federal resources, like funding distributed through a competitive freight investment grant program.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PORT AUTHORITIES,
Alexandria, VA, July 23, 2015.

Hon. JOHN THUNE,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES M. INHOFE,
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL NELSON,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. BARBARA BOXER,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THUNE, CHAIRMAN INHOFE, RANKING MEMBER NELSON AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER BOXER: On behalf of the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) I want to thank you for your leadership on the freight policy and funding provisions included in Division D of the DRIVE Act (H.R. 22) that will be considered on the Senate floor over the next week.

AAPA is the unified and collective voice of the seaport industry in the Americas. AAPA empowers port authorities, maritime industry partners and service providers to serve their global customers and create economic and social value for their communities. Our activities, resources and partnerships connect, inform and unify seaport leaders and maritime professionals in all segments of the industry around the western hemisphere. This letter is on behalf of our U.S. members.

The approach of grouping the Environment and Public Works and Commerce Committees' jurisdictions into one division within the DRIVE Act is a positive step forward. This grouping reinforces a top AAPA priority—that freight policy must be integrated as well as intermodal in order to be efficient, safe and secure. In the past, freight policy and funding measures have been fragmented.

Elevating a policy for freight within your legislation sends a strong message that freight must continue to be a priority and that planning funding and the establishment of a multimodal freight network are critical for the economic growth of our nation.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on building the freight provisions in the DRIVE Act as the legislation moves forward.

Sincerely,

KURT NAGLE,
President and CEO.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the legislation before the Senate is a critically important part of addressing our Nation's current and future transportation investments. As Senator CANTWELL often says: Freight can't wait.

The DRIVE Act includes these critical freight provisions that will help our economy and lead to job creation. Strengthening our freight program is yet one more reason to support this legislation.

Mr. President, I hope before all is said and done in the Senate we will complete action on this legislation this week and get many of these provisions, which are so important to our economy, so important to jobs, and so important to America's competitiveness, passed into law.

Of course, first we have to get action by the House of Representatives in order to get it to the President's desk, but the work that has gone into this is the product of a lot of various Members and committees, those from the stakeholder community offering their input and consultation to get us to the point we are today where I think we have a product we can be proud of and that we can say actually will help address the freight challenges and the needs we have across this country and make our economy even more competitive.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2327

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today with regard to one of the parts of the highway bill we are talking about, and that is the Export-Import Bank, otherwise known as Ex-Im.

I rise today as somebody who feels strongly we need to have a long-term highway bill. I am glad we are on the floor with that because it is about jobs and crumbling infrastructure. I am also pleased that within this bill there is some regulatory reform on the permitting process, and I thank the authors for including my permitting reform bill. But I also am pleased by the fact we also voted to add as an amendment the reauthorization of this Bank called the Export-Import Bank.

If I may, let me talk about why this is so important to Ohio jobs and to jobs around this country and to keeping our economy from falling behind. Some people say: Well, why do we need the government involved in this business of providing financing or credit to companies that do business overseas? Well, frankly, it is because often these are relatively high-risk ventures, so companies cannot get the credits, the guarantees or the loans from private-sector companies.

I will give a few examples of this in a minute, but it is also because of the fact that other countries all over the world have these export credit subsidies. In fact, we are pikers. We have a lot less than our competitors. On average, our competitors do a lot more in terms of supporting their exports than we do.

So we need to have this in order to ensure that we don't lose jobs in this country. By our unilaterally saying we are not going to help our companies to export, we are shooting ourselves in the foot.

Now, if these other countries around the world were to say, you know what, we are going to back off on our export financing, that would be great. When I was U.S. Trade Representative back in the Bush administration, that is what I pushed for. I think we should be getting rid of these subsidies.

By the way, also in terms of agriculture subsidies and others, if there were a level playing field, where our competitors were not doing this, it would be a different world. I will note one thing I like about the amendment that was adopted—or at least the cloture vote here and the amendment that is likely to be adopted to this bill on the Export-Import Bank—is that it requires, as one of the reforms—and, yes, I think it should be reformed—that the administration begin the process of an international negotiation to get rid of these export subsidies all over the world.

In the meantime, if we as the United States of America say unilaterally that we are going to stop these export subsidies through this financing mechanism, we are going to lose jobs. It is not just we are not going to create jobs that would be otherwise created by these projects, it is the fact that some companies will actually move overseas to take advantage of the export subsidies in other countries. They have told me this, and I am sure they have told other Senators this, and Senators know this.

I view this in pretty simple terms: No. 1, this program actually puts money back into the coffers every year rather than taking money out. I think it added about $650 million or so to our surplus last year. Over time it has added billions of dollars, so it is not costing taxpayer money. It brought $7 million in profits to the U.S. Treasury since 1992. Last year it generated $675 million in profits, and by the way, it created 164,000 jobs and $27 billion in exports. So No. 1, it is not one of these government programs that is costing the taxpayer.

No. 2, other countries are doing it, and if we don't do it, they will continue to do it and we will lose out on jobs, on contracts. I am told, for instance, that right now, while this program is in flux—where we are not sure whether it will go forward or not because it has already technically expired—there are 100 transactions sitting in the pipeline worth more than $9 billion, and those transactions won't go forward unless we take action. So again, this is one where the United States of America would be shooting itself in the foot by saying we are not going to expand exports to the detriment of our workers.

Then No. 3, yes, we ought to get busy on reforms to the Export-Import Bank, to make it more transparent. I think that is good. One of the reforms in here, as I said earlier, is to ensure the President submits a strategy for ending government supported export subsidies internationally. The Obama administration should be more aggressive at that. I believe that is appropriate, and they should be doing it.

By the way, it also creates a risk management committee to oversee the Bank's risk exposure. It also sets up a new nonpolitical chief ethics officer to provide oversight with regard to the ethics practices of Bank employees. That is all important, and I support all those reforms. I could probably support some more, too, but let us not shoot ourselves in the foot and lose these good-paying jobs we have in this country.

I view it frankly a lot like the trade debate we just had. What we want to do in trade is have a balance, where we are sending more exports overseas, creating more jobs in this country—in my State of Ohio, in the Presiding Officer's State of Indiana, and other States around this country—at the same time leveling the playing field by increasing our enforcement and stopping the unfair imports from other countries—the dumping and the subsidies.

In the trade bill—we talked a lot about this over the last month—we actually got in place a new amendment to help companies be able to deal with unfairly traded imports, to get a remedy right away, and it is already working. SHERROD BROWN, my colleague from Ohio, and I put together an amendment. It is part of the trade bill that was passed. Already, tire workers in Ohio, United Steelworkers union employees in Ohio have been able to take advantage of that because they got a positive determination from the International Trade Commission, in part because we gave them better tools. We improved the law to be able to more easily show they have been injured by these unfairly traded imports that are sold below cost or dumped or subsidized and so that they can get the relief needed to avoid losing so many jobs that they go out of business.

That is one thing we ought to be doing to expand exports—more trade. Another thing we ought to be doing is ensuring we aren't pulling back on this export financing—again, it doesn't cost the taxpayers anything—at a time when we are under-exporting compared to what we should be doing as a country.

When we look at our exports per capita in the United States of America, I think we are somewhere between Tonga and Ethiopia in terms of our exports per capita. Other countries depend a lot more on trade than we do.

We need to export more. Why? It creates good jobs—jobs that pay 13 percent to 15 percent more on average and offer better benefits. The last thing we want to do is to pull the rug out from under these exporters by saying we are going to change the law to make it even harder to export and put American workers at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the rest of the world.

It is the same thing with regard to trade policy, generally. Let's expand exports by opening up markets for our products through good trade agreements, and let's enforce the laws and increase the enforcement, as we did with regard to the amendment I talked about earlier. That makes it easier for those tire workers at Cooper Tire in Ohio and around the country to be able to say: This isn't fair. The Chinese tires—in this case—are coming in under cost and are being subsidized. We want our government to stand up for us so we can compete and so we can export more of our product.

So if we were not to allow this Export-Import Bank to continue, it would be running counter to everything we just did in the trade bill. We want more exports.

The final thing I have to say, again, is if we don't allow American companies to compete globally as American workers making products here in America, some of these companies are going to go overseas. A lot of them already have production overseas. Let's be honest. A lot of these U.S. multinational companies make things all over the world on two, three, four continents. They can shift production overseas, and then they take advantage of the export guarantees in that country. That is what some of them have told me they are likely to do if we don't have an export guarantee in this country and we don't do anything about the international situation, where these other countries do more than we do.

That reminds me of another topic we ought to be taking up here on the floor of the Senate, and that is tax reform, because our Tax Code does the same thing. Our Tax Code says to an American company: You can't compete fairly. You have to compete with one hand tied behind your back. It is the American workers who are hurt by this because our tax rate is so high. Because of the way we tax internationally, we make it an advantage to be a foreign company. That is why so many U.S. companies are becoming foreign companies. Last year there were twice as many transactions in dollar terms—twice as many as the year before—of foreign companies taking over U.S. companies, driven largely by our inefficient and out-of-date Tax Code.

So if we combine all of these—if we combine what is going on with trade, if we combine what is going on with our tax system—we certainly don't want to put our workers at a further disadvantage by pulling the rug out from under them with regard to this export financing. Yes, let's try to get the rest of the world to do the right thing. But in the meantime, let's not shoot ourselves in the foot.

On many of these projects overseas, there is a de facto requirement that you have to have financing from a government. All these other countries provide it. So whether in Africa, Asia or in some of these other emerging economies, they say: Where is your financing? This is why, as I said, there are about 100 projects in limbo right now.

Let me talk about some of the companies in Ohio that benefit from this Export-Import Bank—again, this bank that actually puts money back into the coffers every year. I have talked to these companies, and I have talked to the workers on the line whose jobs are at stake because of what we are going to decide here in this body.

One is U.S. Bridge. They are in Cambridge, OH. They have been manufacturing and building bridges in America and around the world for 81 years. They are quite a success story. Their global business depends on the financial guarantees of the Export-Import Bank. They can't compete in bidding for these projects around the world without it. Recently, they got a $100 million contract to build bridges in West Africa, but it was immediately put in jeopardy after they got it because Congress refused to move on the Ex-Im Bank one way or the other. We just allowed it to expire without even voting on it. That is one of those projects currently in limbo. They have 150 employees in a very small county with high unemployment in Eastern Ohio.

If they get this job we talked about to build bridges in West Africa, they say they can add up to 50 new manufacturing workers with this one contract. That is a big deal for a family-owned company that has been a cornerstone of the eastern part of Ohio in the small town of Cambridge, which has 10,000 people. That is 50 jobs right there, in a small town in an area of Ohio that has high unemployment, that are at stake if we don't move on Export-Import Bank.

Let me talk about McGregor Metalworking in Springfield, OH. I know a lot about the McGregor family because they are distant cousins of mine. My family was the McCullough family. They came to Springfield from Scotland.

The McGregors run a company that is a staple of the community. They are pillars in the community. They have skilled trade jobs. The workers there get good pay and good benefits. However, they are very concerned about what is going on with the Ex-Im Bank. More than 60 workers at McGregor work directly on products that depend on Ex-Im financing. That is about 16 percent of McGregor's sales. They are not a big company, but they are a really important company to that community, to those workers, and to their families.

So to the people who have stood up on this floor over the last couple of days and said this is not about jobs, this is about jobs, folks. This is not just about big businesses. Yes, it is about them, and that is important too. We want those jobs here as well. It is also about a lot of small businesses.

I recently spoke to some of the workers at McGregor. They told me there are a lot of manufacturing issues they just can't control—their health care costs, which are going up. ObamaCare has not helped. It has made it worse. In Ohio, they are told their costs are going to go up between 10 percent and 33 percent next year. That is what the insurance companies have told them. The price of steel goes up and down. Sometimes it is tough to get the skills to be able to compete and to get these jobs in places such as McGregor. Those are things that are out of their control. But Ex-Im is something they know we can control, and they are wondering why we are making it even more difficult and less predictable for them by not acting.

Let me talk about another small business in Hamilton, OH, called Kaivac. They employ 50 people. They manufacture commercial cleaning machines used to clean floors in schools, museums, stadiums, and airports. They are a kind of modern-day mop and pail.

With the help of Ex-Im, Kaivac grew its international sales by 60 percent last year, exporting their commercial cleaning machines all over the world. But as we have heard repeatedly, this is another company that said they can't do that in the future if they don't get this financing from Ex-Im.

So what will happen to these companies? For a lot of these smaller companies, they will just lose business, and they will lose jobs. They will lose the jobs they already have, and they won't be able to gain the jobs we have talked about today.

For some of the bigger companies, they will be OK. They will move overseas. Frankly, I am not worried about the companies. I am worried about the workers in Ohio—American workers who work hard, play by the rules, and do all the right things. We are going to pull the rug out from under them. That doesn't make any sense to me. We need to stand up for these American workers. Whether it is with regard to trade or whether it is with regard to taxes, as we talked about earlier, Washington is letting them down. We are not doing the basic things we ought to be doing to create the environment for success to allow them to be able to compete and to win.

Today we have the opportunity to stand with American workers. We have the opportunity to move forward—yes, with regard to trade, knocking down barriers to our exports, making sure there is a more level playing field, including the amendment we talked about earlier that allows us now to bring trade cases and get results and help American workers. We have to be sure that we do reform this Tax Code, because if we don't, more American companies and investments are going to go overseas. That is our job. We are letting the American worker down right now.

I see Senator SCHUMER here on the floor. Senator SCHUMER has been working on this international tax reform issue, and his point is a very simple one: We want the jobs and investments here. We are tired of seeing companies get taken over by foreign companies and move their jobs to those other countries. We saw this recently. A pharmaceutical company got bought by a foreign entity. By the way, the foreign company had just left America. They inverted to another country. They then came back and started buying American companies. One third of the workforce of that company bought by the foreign company is now gone—Raleigh, NC, to Canada.

So these are things we can do. It is within our control here in this body for us to pass these kinds of bills and, with regard to Ex-Im, to ensure that we are not shooting ourselves in the foot and shooting American workers in the foot by taking away their opportunity to, yes, win these bids, to win these competitions, to build that bridge in West Africa, to send those cleaning supplies all over the world, to be able to ensure, with regard to McGregor Industries, that the parts they put into those locomotive engines that get sent to developed countries and developing countries can continue to grow.

Our job here is not to make life harder for these workers and these small companies. It is to make it easier for them to compete and to win so that we can begin to bring back not just more jobs but better jobs.

Over the last 6 years, we have seen wages flatten out and on average go down. Economists tell me it is about a 6-percent reduction in real wages. Think about that. This at a time when health care costs are up, in part thanks to ObamaCare, which makes it harder, not easier, to get health care at a reasonable cost. Education costs are up. Electricity costs are going up, in part because of the regulations that the Obama administration is putting on the economy in my home State of Ohio and around the country. That is called the middle-class squeeze. Wages are flat and declining, and expenses going up. That is what the people I represent are experiencing.

Let's not make it more difficult for them. Let's stand up for American workers. Yes, let's tell the Obama administration, as this legislation does: You are required to put more pressure on the international community and other countries to reduce their export subsidies, their guarantees, their credit agencies. But in the meantime, let's be sure we are standing up for the people we represent and doing the right thing for the American worker.

I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I support the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank and support American manufacturing, because a country that doesn't make something can't make something of itself.

I have seen everything manufactured in Maryland, from crab cakes on Kent Island and ice cream in Laurel to commercial truck engines in Hagerstown and unmanned aircraft in Hunt Valley. I have met with innovative manufacturers who credit the Export-Import Bank with helping them grow their businesses by exporting to new markets overseas.

Through critical assistance, at no cost to taxpayers, these small and medium-sized businesses are able to sell American products around the world.

I visit businesses all over Maryland. I have visited bakeries, microbreweries, factories of small machine tool companies. I visited Main Street, small streets, rural communities. And I have talked with business owners and their employees.

These are ''good guy'' businesses. They work hard and play by the rules. They have jobs right here in the U.S. They want to expand. They want to hire. They need a government on their side and at their side.

Some business owners I met with said that the secure financing at the Export-Import bank helped them strengthen their business and grow.

Selling your products overseas isn't as simple as selling them locally. But getting secure credit insurance helped Maryland manufacturers that relied on cash-in-advance payments for exports expand their businesses by exporting to new markets.

Other business owners I met with said that the Export-Import Bank was a lifeline during a difficult economy. They told me that they relied on private financing before 2008, but during the credit crisis even safe investments couldn't get help from the private sector. The Export-Import Bank helped them weather the storm.

The Export-Import Bank provides critical direct loans and loan guarantees to foreign buyers of U.S.-made goods. The Export-Import Bank also provides working capital loans to small businesses that are exporting. And it provides insurance for exporters in case a foreign buyer fails to pay.

In all these cases the bank is filling gaps in the private market. It is an important tool for U.S. companies that are seeking to compete with foreign firms, and those foreign firms often get aggressive trade financing support from their own national governments.

On July 1, 2015, the authorization for the Export-Import Bank lapsed. Right now, the bank is unable to process applications or engage in new business. The bank cannot authorize any new transaction to do any new lending or help any businesses with any new exports. That puts American jobs at risk. American businesses and workers are missing new opportunities because they can't get the new financing they need to close the deal and make the sale abroad.

A vote to support the Export-Import Bank is a vote to support American manufacturing jobs. Reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank means Maryland will be able to export more, manufacture more, and create more jobs.

The Export-Import Bank helped over $27 billion in export sales in fiscal year 2014 and supported 164,000 jobs nationwide.

Nearly 90 percent of the transactions done by the Export-Import Bank directly supported small businesses.

From 2007 to 2015, the Export-Import Bank financed $2 billion in exports from Maryland.

The Export-Import Bank is about helping Main Street. It is about helping the entrepreneurs with a dream in their heart, with a small business underway, with the grit and determination to be able to create a job for themselves and for others.

I call upon my colleagues to think about where America is going in the 21st century. Where are we going to be? Are we going to create more opportunity? Are we going to create more jobs that pay good wages with good benefits?

I am proud to stand firm in my commitment to manufacturing jobs from Hagerstown to Stevensville and from Baltimore to Easton.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. 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. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, the facts are undeniable. Climate change is real, it is caused by humans, it is happening now, and, it is solvable.

Today I would like to talk about a noncontroversial way to reduce 10 percent of the world's carbon pollution: fighting deforestation.

Of course, no single action will solve climate change, but stopping deforestation is underrated as a solution, with a high impact and a low cost. While we have been on this floor for years in an intense, often partisan, debate over pipelines and the EPA's rules on coal-fired powerplants, forest conservation is an area where we have always had strong bipartisan support.

As forests are cut down, two things happen. First, carbon stored in trees is released. Second, the trees stop absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

Each year, the world loses forests the size of Ohio, and that rate is increasing. Unless we act, an area twice the size of Texas will be lost by the year 2030.

Of course, most deforestation is happening in tropical forests, in the Amazon, the Congo River Basin, and in Southeast Asia. But global demand, including demand from the United States, for palm oil, soy, beef, and timber products greatly contributes to forest loss in these regions.

This is why the United States has to lead in stopping deforestation. There are three things that we can do: First, we have to fully implement and fund the Lacey Act. This law prohibits the import of illegally harvested wood products but has only been in place since 2008. Congress hasn't given the USDA and other agencies the tools to fully implement it. We are good at catching raw products like lumber from illegally harvested forests, but we still need more tools to catch illegal wood, which is in processed products such as furniture.

Full enforcement of the Lacey Act could keep 27 million metric tons of carbon pollution out of the atmosphere each year. This is equivalent to the emissions from more than 5 million cars every year. The Lacey Act is also good for the U.S. timber industry because illegally harvested wood products undercut this industry by $1 billion in 2013 by reducing the competitive advantage of legal timber.

Second, we have to support private sector commitments to stopping deforestation. We have had some recent very good news in this space. Driven by consumer demand, 34 corporations recently committed to cutting deforestation from their products in half by 2020 and ending it by 2030. These are big companies—Walmart, McDonald's, and Unilever, among many others. These businesses were joined by 35 governments, 16 indigenous groups, and 45 NGOs. This was the first time that leaders from developed and developing countries have partnered around a timeline for ending deforestation.

One challenge in meeting these commitments is that we don't have a robust standard to verify that they are being met. Without this, we are merely taking everyone's word for it, but the United States can lead in monitoring and verifying these commitments. Publicly available satellite imagery from NASA and USGS has already allowed forest scientists to measure the magnitude of global deforestation, but we still need more accurate, real-time monitoring of the carbon content in forests, and the technologies do exist.

Finally, we have to provide forested countries with technical and financial support to protect and grow their forests. Absorbing carbon with trees is more cost-effective and more energy efficient than doing so from coal or gas powerplants. This is because trees capture carbon using energy from the Sun and powerplants capture carbon using additional energy from a powerplant.

Despite the ability of forests to capture and store carbon, we can't just tell landowners to stop cutting down their trees. They are often in a very dire financial situation on a personal level. We have to share with them our expertise in sustainable forest management—how to prosper from a forest without cutting it down and moving on to the next stand. The State Department, USAID, and USDA bring sought-after knowledge in this area from how to fight forest fires to how to combat illegal logging.

We also have to provide financial incentives for landowners to protect their forests. The economic benefit of forests is real. They store carbon, filter water, keep soil healthy, and protect against erosion.

The value of a forest's ecological services, not just its raw materials, must be recognized in the global economy. REDD-plus programs—shorthand for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation—provide a mechanism for financially rewarding countries that reduce emissions from deforestation. If we want to lead in solving climate change, we have to contribute our fair share to these programs.

Thankfully, forests in the United States absorb more carbon than they release. However, the U.S. Forest Service estimates that the loss of forests through urban growth and wildfires could make our forests a source of carbon pollution as soon as 2030. We have to ensure that our forests continue to absorb more carbon than they release and work with our allies to protect our forests abroad.

We have solutions on climate change. Stopping deforestation is one of them, and it is one of the solutions I am most excited about because it is an opportunity for bipartisan work. We know what we need to do, and we know how to do it.

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.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we have been discussing the value of having a multiyear transportation bill, a highway bill moving through the Senate. It is something that I, too, would like to see, but as with everything that we do around here, it is important how we do it. When you have a multiyear highway bill, it is important to ask the question, how are we paying for that?

One of the considerations that is in front of this body is to pay for $9 billion of this multiyear highway bill through a selloff of crude oil from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve—SPR.

I have come before this floor several times already during this debate to try to convince colleagues that this is exactly the wrong way to address our transportation priorities by selling off a national energy security priority; basically, an insurance policy that we have for this country, an insurance policy to ensure that at the time that we might be most vulnerable with our energy supplies, we have reserves, we have a safety net we can turn to in the event of an emergency brought about by a hurricane or natural disaster or whether it is a manmade disaster, war or something else that has caused global disruption.

In short, it boggles my mind that we would be willing, so willing and almost eager, to tap into this strategic asset for such short-term and limited gain. In the absence of supply disruption that justifies releasing oil from the SPR, selling our strategic reserves only worsens an existing competitive disadvantage for our American oil producers.

As you know, we have in place an outdated 40-year-old-plus ban on our ability to sell our domestic crude oil overseas. We are limited in our ability to export that. I think that is a wrong and outdated policy, and I am working with many, including the occupant of the chair, to lift this outdated policy. I have introduced legislation to do just that. We will actually have a bill before the banking committee tomorrow to, again, shed some light on the fact that it is so incredibly inconsistent from a policy perspective that we would be talking about lifting the sanctions on Iran, allowing Iran to access the broader global market so they can sell their oil reserves, so they can take advantage of the resources that will come to them to do who knows what mischief, while at the same time prohibiting, further prohibiting in this country our oil producers that opportunity to access the global market. By lifting the sanctions on Iran and keeping the oil export ban in place in this country, we are effectively sanctioning our own U.S. oil producers. That is wrong. Again, we are working to address that.

We are in a situation currently in which American companies cannot sell oil to the same countries that we let Iran sell its own oil to. Now, with this proposal in front of us to sell off some 101 million barrels of oil from the SPR, we are potentially going to saturate a market that is already oversupplied. Think about what that means to those in Oklahoma where the rig count in this country right now is down by half of what it was just last year. We are at a 5-year low with that. Our market is oversaturated.

This morning I introduced yet another white paper out of the energy committee. It is entitled ‘‘A Turbulent World: In Defense of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.’’ This white paper outlines some of the history behind the SPR, why I feel so strongly and why I will continue to come to this floor to oppose the sale of 101 million barrels of oil from the SPR to pay for a portion of this highway bill.

Let's take a look at the history of when we have had emergency drawdowns. We have had exactly three emergency drawdowns ever. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve has been in place since the mid-1970s. We had a drawdown in 1991 with Desert Storm. We had a drawdown in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit and then in Libya in 2011 during their civil war.

This red right here is the 101 million barrels that this legislation seeks to sell off—101 million barrels. The total amount of sales from emergency drawdowns ever combined is 58.9 million barrels.

What we are talking about doing is, in one act, taking 101 million barrels and putting it out there on the market. In the 40 years that we have had access to reserves in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, we have had three emergency drawdowns—one, a hurricane and, two, in the event of disruption for war, and together, all three of those totaled just shy of 60 million barrels. Yet this proposal is 101 million barrels.

We have exchanged oil out of the SPR a total of 12 times. This was in Hurricanes Isaac, Katrina, Lili, Ivan, Gustav, and Ike. We have created a home heating oil reserve. We have closed some ship channels for accidents. We have imported oil from Mexico. All of those exchanges, not drawdowns, but all of those totaled only 68.9 million barrels. Again, we are talking about a 101-million-barrel sale. We have also done test sales. We have done three test sales. In 1985, in 1990, and then in 2014. We have also closed down a reserve site—Weeks Island. We have sold off some barrels for that. The total for all of that activity was 15 million barrels for all four sales.

I have had people tell me: Oh, don't overreact here; don't overreact. This is no different than what we did with the two sales in 1996 for Federal deficit reduction.

Let's look at that chart. In 1996, we had a deficit reduction in May, which is shown in blue, and then in October we did further reductions, and that is shown in green. Both of those sales totaled 23 million barrels. Again, back in 1996, there was a total of 23 million, and what we are looking at with this legislation is, again, a selloff of 101 million barrels. That is not even a fair comparison. Selling 101 million barrels would be the equivalent of 60 percent of all of the oil that has ever left the SPR.

We have effectively taken out a total of 161 million barrels and moved that out of this SPR since it was created in 1975, about 40 years ago. We have had three emergency drawdowns, we have had the exchanges I talked about, we had test sales, and then we had the sales in 1996 with the Federal deficit reduction. If we take all of that together—everything in the history of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that we ever sold off or exchanged—it brings us to 161 million barrels, and now we are talking about selling 101 million barrels, which is 60 percent.

I think it is important to put into context because this is a big fat deal. Yet we are acting like this is just another withdrawal from your ATM. Just go down, check the balance, there is enough money in there so it must be OK.

Let's talk about the strategic environment we are operating in right now. There is a nominal drawdown capacity of 4.4 million barrels per day. I mentioned this the last time I was on the floor. The drawdown capacity is subject to some discussion in terms of what we are actually able to pump out, and that is why we do test sales. It is to make sure it works as it was designed.

Secretary of Energy Moniz has suggested that our distribution rate—our ability to move this once we take it out—is significantly less than this nominal drawdown capacity of 4.4 million barrels due to congestion and changes in midstream infrastructure. This is one of the reasons I have been banging the lectern, and Senator CANTWELL, the ranking member on the energy committee, has also been joining me in saying that doing this is not appropriate. We have significant maintenance issues within the SPR that we need to address. There is somewhere between $1.5 billion and $2 billion that it is going to take to address some of the shortcomings we have in the SPR, some of the maintenance and operations aspect of it. As we speak, there is a study underway to determine the right size of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. What do we need to do in terms of maintenance?

If we go ahead and sell off 60 percent of what we have done historically throughout the whole lifetime of the SPR to fund a highway bill for 6 years—again, it just causes one to wonder why we are doing this because of the strategic environment and the drawdown capacity we have.

We have a pretty volatile world out there, and I think we all know that. We have unplanned disruptions, unplanned production outages, if you will, in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Nigeria, Libya, and Iran. These are around 2.5 to 3 million barrels per day. These are pretty tense regions of the world, and I don't think anyone would dispute that.

On the next chart what we see is our drawdown rate of 4.4 or thereabouts is greater than the daily production of Iran, Iraq, Venezuela, Nigeria, Algeria or Libya. I don't think anybody would suggest that any of these countries in blue exudes stability or security.

Look at the transit chokepoints. A drawdown rate of 4.4 million barrels per day is bigger, in fairness, than the capacity of some of the other areas that would be clearly noted as these chokepoints. We have the Panama Canal at the end, the Turkish or Danish Straits, and Bab el-Mandab off the coast of Yemen. If something went wrong in more than one of these critical parts of the supply chain at once, we could be overtaken by upheaval in the global oil market without much recourse and our ability to respond would be dramatically lessened. And 4.4 million barrels per day is less than the oil that transships the Suez Canal and its accompanying pipeline. It is a fraction of the oil that goes through the Strait of Malacca or Strait of Hormuz which moves 15 to 17 million barrels per day.

This my central point. Our Strategic Petroleum Reserve is a tremendous national security asset, and we need it because the world is just simply more turbulent. I have been told: Look at what is happening domestically. We are importing less and producing more; therefore, we don't really need all of this. We don't need this safety net. We cannot immunize ourselves from global events and just suggest that somehow or other we need it less. It is like you go to the doctor and get a clean bill of health and you go home and you say: OK. Now I don't need life insurance or health insurance because the doctor just said I am fine. You know what. The world is not fine, and we know that. At a time when spare capacity is low and the global threat environment is heightened, selling 101 million barrels of America's strategic reserve to pay for legislation that makes almost no contribution to improving our energy security, I think, is just a foolish error of historic proportions.

I will restate what we would be doing if we moved forward with the pay-for as has been outlined. We would be conducting the largest sale in the history of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve since it was created in 1975. It would be greater than all of the previous emergency drawdowns combined. We are going into hurricane season. We don't know what may be coming at us in the Middle East. Yet we are proposing to pay for a short-term fix to the highway trust fund with a buyout of unprecedented proportions.

Last time I was on the floor, I said this is like cashing out your homeowner's insurance to pave your driveway. It is not the right pay-for.

Again, I, too, want to make sure we do right by our transportation infrastructure. It is important. It is about jobs and the strength of our economy, but we are also obligated to make sure the decisions we make in this Senate—in this Congress—are there to provide for our security as a nation.

I want to know that if we need these ready resources, we haven't moved precipitously to sell them off. The last time I checked this morning, the price of oil was at about $50 a barrel. Is this really a good time to sell at $50 a barrel?

I thank the Presiding Officer for his attention. I think those of us who have been following this issue with great interest are concerned and are conflicted because we want to make sure we do right by our highway systems, but I also want to make sure we do right by our national energy security, and selling off 101 million barrels of Strategic Petroleum Reserve is foolhardy.

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. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 219 through 223, 225 through 231, and 233 through 247, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. John N. T. Shanahan

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Michael X. Garrett

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 156:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Darse E. Crandall

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Joseph E. Tofalo

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment as the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 154:

To be general

Gen. Paul J. Selva

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Gen. Darren W. McDew

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. David J. Buck

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Tod D. Wolters

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. Russell J. Handy

The following Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Frank H. Stokes

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. John W. Raymond

IN THE ARMY

The following Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be brigadier general

Col. James E. Porter, Jr.

The following named Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Kevin D. Scott

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Kevin M. Donegan

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Michael H. Shields

The following Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Victor J. Braden

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Richard P. Breckenridge

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following Air National Guard of the United States officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Colonel David W. Ashley
Colonel Jeremy O. Baenen
Colonel Stephen F. Baggerly
Colonel Samuel W. Black
Colonel Christine M. Burckle
Colonel David B. Burgy
Colonel Janus D. Butcher
Colonel John D. Caine
Colonel Craig A. Campbell
Colonel Joseph S. Chisolm
Colonel Floyd W. Dunstan
Colonel Douglas A. Farnham
Colonel Laurie M. Farris
Colonel Jerry L. Fenwick
Colonel Dawn M. Ferrell
Colonel Douglas E. Fick
Colonel Arthur J. Flora
Colonel Donald A. Furland
Colonel Timothy H. Gaasch
Colonel Kerry M. Gentry
Colonel Jerome M. Gouhin
Colonel Randy E. Greenwood
Colonel Robert J. Grey, Jr.
Colonel Edith M. Grunwald
Colonel Gregory M. Henderson
Colonel Elizabeth A. Hill
Colonel John S. Joseph
Colonel Jill A. Lannan
Colonel James M. LeFavor
Colonel Jeffrey A. Lewis
Colonel Timothy T. Lunderman
Colonel Eric W. Mann
Colonel Betty J. Marshall
Colonel Sherrie L. McCandless
Colonel Kevin T. McManaman
Colonel David J. Meyer
Colonel Steven S. Nordhaus
Colonel Scott W. Normandeau
Colonel Richard C. Oxner, Jr.
Colonel Kirk S. Pierce
Colonel Theresa B. Prince
Colonel David L. Romuald
Colonel Edward A. Sauley, III
Colonel Keith A. Schell
Colonel Brian M. Simpler
Colonel Charles G. Stevenson
Colonel Bradley A. Swanson
Colonel Dean A. Tremps
Colonel William M Valentine