

As the only immigrant serving in the Senate today, I remember very well my mother's courage in bringing her three children to this country so that we could have a chance at a better life. That is what comprehensive immigration reform will mean to the 11 million people living in the shadows in our country—a chance for a better life for themselves and their families. These are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers; and they are neighbors and friends. They are not looking for handouts. They are looking for the chance for a better life, and that is the universal appeal of our great country.

As leaders, we need to act to make real for these millions of people the promise of America. We need to pass comprehensive immigration reform soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to leave the bill for a couple of minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I would yield to the Senator from Oklahoma for the purpose of explaining an amendment that he has at the desk, and a modification—a very good amendment, I might add.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Thank you, Madam President.

It is my intention to ask to set aside the pending amendment for the purpose of considering the Inhofe amendment No. 2820, and I want to explain what this is.

Today the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the FAA are working on the next generation radar system. We have talked about this for a long period of time. I think the Senate knows that this Senator has been active in aviation for a long time, and this is something we have been working on together. The next generation radar system, called Multi-function Phased Array Radar, or MPAR, is comprised of individual radar stations capable of both air traffic tracking and weather surveillance.

The new system will replace the multiple systems separately maintained by the FAA and NOAA and allow the consolidation of the number of discrete radar sites in the United States by about a third and yet do a more thorough job.

To support the development of the next generation radar, it is important for the FAA and NOAA to be working together and one not getting out in front of the other one. For that reason—and I think my junior Senator, who is going to be working on this, agrees—there is some concern that the FAA is getting out in front of NOAA on the selection of technology to meet both goals. We would clarify that in the amendment.

What I will be asking for is the consideration of amendment No. 2820, as

modified. The modification is at the desk now, expressing the sense of the Senate that the FAA and NOAA continue to work together so that one agency doesn't get out ahead of the other and ensuring that the priorities of both agencies are met. Sometimes you have to get involved with the bureaucracies when there is more than one working on it.

At the proper time, I will be wanting to do that. There is a courtesy being extended to another Member to be involved perhaps in this.

So with that, I will yield the floor and be prepared to offer my amendment.

Ms. COLLINS. I want to thank the Senator from Oklahoma for his courtesy to one of our colleagues who is on his way to the floor to repeat an earlier ritual that we went through when one of our colleagues attempted to make an amendment pending.

So in deference to that colleague, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I spent some time on the floor a few minutes ago explaining an amendment that I have. It is amendment No. 2820, as modified. The modification is at the desk. It is one of those things where there is no opposition at all.

We are trying to get to a new radar system that is—it is rather complicated. It will end up saving a lot of money and letting other people in other parts of the country—all over the country—have the radar capability they don't have today. So it is something I know that no reasonable person would object to.

Madam President, for that reason, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up my amendment No. 2820, as modified with the changes at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, the biggest issue of the day is how we protect ourselves from terrorism. My amendment goes to the heart of the matter.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. PAUL. Are we sufficiently vetting those who might come here and attack us from the Middle East?

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. PAUL. I don't think we are. The two Boston bombers were here during the refugee program. Two Iraqi refugees came to my hometown—

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, Parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. PAUL. Of Bowling Green, KY.

Mr. INHOFE. Parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. PAUL. I have an amendment that is not only pertinent—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PAUL. To the biggest issue of the day. I have an amendment that is germane.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PAUL. For those who make a mockery of this process by saying we are going to have regular order, we are not going to have regular order—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PAUL. Until we address the issues of the day on a germane amendment.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, until 2 p.m. today.

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

Ms. COLLINS. 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.

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

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

TRANSPORTATION-HUD APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, for the information of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I would like to explain the situation we face. First, let me say that working very closely with the ranking member of the subcommittee, my friend and colleague Senator JACK REED, we have been making very good progress on this bill.

We have a number of amendments offered by Senators from both sides of the aisle that we have agreed to work out, to clear on both sides, with both managers of the bill. In some cases we have also gotten to the authorizing committees, the Budget Committee. In other words, a great deal of hard work has gone into clearing amendments that are ready to be considered, that could be accepted by voice vote or

unanimous consent or in a managers' package. I am confident because of this bipartisan cooperation, because of the extraordinarily hard work of our staffs, that we could finish this appropriations bill today.

Would that not be progress for the Senate, to be able to complete action on a bill that has vital funding for homeless veterans, for homeless youth, for disabled and low-income elderly who depend on the subsidized housing programs that are funded in this bill? This bill has important infrastructure spending. All of us are aware of the deteriorating infrastructure, the crumbling roads and structurally deficient bridges that we have in this country, the need for improvements in rail safety, in our transit system.

There are so many issues that are important to the American people. This bill funds the Community Development Block Grant Program, possibly one of the most popular programs with State and local officials for spurring economic development and job creation in their communities, but, alas, we have encountered a roadblock. As we have seen this morning, even amendments that have been cleared on both sides of the aisle are not being allowed to proceed. I think that is so unfortunate because with cooperation I am confident we could have finished work on this bill and moved to final passage today. Regrettably, that is not going to occur unless there is a change of heart.

I do want to say I recognize there are other very important issues for us to deal with. The House today is taking up a bill that would deal with the screening process for refugees who come into this country. All of us recognize that our first obligation is the security of the American people. That is not what the bill before us is dealing with, but there is action on the House side. A bill is expected to pass today with widespread bipartisan support and will be sent over for our consideration. So I think it is unfortunate that we apparently cannot complete action on the appropriations bill that is before us.

However, I do want to assure my colleagues that we are going to continue to work on this bill. We are going to continue to review the amendments that have been filed. We are going to work with the sponsors. We are going to work with the floor managers. We are going to continue to make progress behind the scenes in the event that we find a way around this roadblock.

In the meantime, I do want to express my appreciation to my ranking member, Senator REED, for his close cooperation on this bill. He and I introduced the substitute amendment jointly when we began work on this bill. A special thanks to our staffs who have been working night and day to clear amendments that are ready go but unfortunately cannot be considered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Madam President, this whole process has been moved forward

by the leadership of Chairman COLLINS. She and her staff have done an extraordinary job of taking the additional resources made available by the budget agreement and constructively focusing them towards addressing important policies in transportation and housing in the United States.

As Chairman COLLINS discussed, we have about nine amendments—bipartisan amendments—that have been agreed to that focus on housing and transportation issues exclusively. These amendments also display the give-and-take and back-and-forth that is necessary, the compromise that is necessary. One example is the amendment that Senator CORNYN, along with Senator HARRY REID, proposed that dealt with small airports throughout the United States.

Those are the types of issues that should be the focal point of our deliberations on the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, and that is what we have tried to do. Frankly, under Senator COLLINS' leadership, we were moving forward, but we have run into a bit of an impasse. We are going to continue to work because it is critical to the country that we rebuild our infrastructure and make sure that we have adequate, affordable housing, which is key to so many things—to having a job, to holding a job, to children being in a school for the whole year and not moving from school to school. All of these are tied directly to our efforts here today.

I again compliment the chairman for her extraordinary efforts. The staffs have done a superb job. We will continue to work. Our objective is to get a bill done and move forward in the process. Unfortunately, we have hit this bump, but we are still going down the road.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Madam President, the Presiding Officer has been in the chair before when I have done my waste of the week. This is my 27th "Waste of the Week" this year, where I come to the floor of the Senate and take a documented waste, fraud, or abuse within the Federal Government, expose that abuse, and inform taxpayers that their hard-earned money is being wasted by this Federal Government. We are taking those items that have been documented by government accounting agencies, by agencies that have been charged with the responsibility of looking into how we spend the taxpayers' money and alerting us to problems of fraud, waste, and abuse.

So No. 27 waste of the week is up this week, and this week it involves the issue of paid leave. This is an executive policy which applies to departments and agencies across the Federal Government.

Specifically, what I wish to do today is highlight the \$31 million in payments to Federal employees who have received paid leave for over a 1-year period of time. For Federal employees, paid administrative leave is typically a paid, excused absence that is separate from vacation time. It includes things such as jury duty or time to allow a person to transition home after an overseas deployment or post. Some agencies also use paid leave when making personnel evaluations. This could include things such as investigations into alleged misconduct, security threats, and similar situations where the employee should be restricted from the worksite while the investigation occurs. Many of these are legitimate. Many of these fall into this category. But being given paid leave for over a year?

First, it raises the question, What is going on here? This is way beyond the norm.

Secondly, shouldn't we have some documentation as to why this takes place? Currently, Federal agencies across the Federal Government have the authority to set their own policies regarding administrative leave, and this leads to a variety of different policies from agency to agency. Why are there discrepancies among agencies in both length of time and the frequency of the granted paid leave?

What is particularly troubling to me is that an audit by the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, found that 263 employees have received paid administrative leave for over a 1-year period of time—more than 1 year. Most of us expect, yes, OK, 2 days off or a week off because I have been selected for jury duty. I have a citizen's and a resident's obligation to do that. Paid leave is justified on that basis. For someone returning from a post overseas, to get resettled, paid leave is justified. There are some other justifications. But over a year? Paid leave for over a year and \$31 million paid out to people who haven't worked for over a year? Something needs to be looked into regarding how and why that takes place.

Last month, the Washington Post told a story about how this issue has persisted within the Department of Homeland Security even after the report was issued. The Post article states that "close to 100 DHS [Department of Homeland Security] employees still are being paid not to work for more than a year."

So I think the question we need to ask ourselves in response to this report is why? Why did the Federal Government spend \$31 million to pay 263 employees not to work for more than a year? And what is the justification for the 1-year paid leaves? Unfortunately, the Government Accountability Office was unable to disclose the specific details as to why these 263 individuals were on paid leave for over a year. However, there are public reports that give examples of employees who have