

also thank Andrew Dohrman and Jason Albritton. I would include so many others, but I see that Senator BOXER is still here, and I would like to just conclude right now. I know Senator BOXER wants to recognize some of the people that worked so hard in her shop, and we worked with a lot of people.

I will yield to Senator BOXER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am so relieved we voted on a 5-year, fully-funded surface transportation bill that increases funding for our highway and transit programs. This is a monumental accomplishment for us all. The Environment and Public Works Committee has led the way to achieving the longest surface transportation bill that this country has seen in 17 years, which is essential for jobs, for our safety, and for our economic standing in the world.

This bill, which passed the House by a vote of 359 to 65, will provide the certainty that our States and local governments need to plan and construct improvements to the Nation's surface transportation system. It will support millions of jobs and thousands of businesses. Our bill has the support of a broad coalition of labor, business, and government organizations, including the AFL-CIO, Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Transportation Mobility Coalition, Teamsters, Transportation Construction Coalition, American Road and Transportation Builders Association, National Association of Counties, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, National Association of Manufacturers, American Trucking Associations, Highway Materials Group, Associated General Contractors, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Traffic Safety Services Association, Transport Workers Union, American Society of Civil Engineers, International Union of Operating Engineers, Amalgamated Transit Union, United Steelworkers, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors, and American Association of Port Authorities.

The FAST Act is a comprehensive bill that, among other things, modernizes federal highway and transit programs, motor carrier and vehicle safety programs, and includes a passenger rail authorization. We should also not forget that it reauthorizes the Export-Import Bank, which is so important for jobs and our economic competitiveness.

It was a mammoth task to put this bill together and it has been a roller coaster ride from day one. I am pleased that this entire process was jump-started when my dear friend JIM INHOFE, who has been my partner on many infrastructure issues, worked with me to pass a highway bill out of the EPW Committee on June 24 by a unanimous 20-0 vote. I truly believe

that it was our overwhelming bipartisan vote that set the stage and built momentum for this bill to begin moving through the Senate.

I also want to thank Chairman SHUSTER and Congressman DEFAZIO in the House. They led a strong bipartisan effort in the House of Representatives which allowed us to go to conference with the wind at our back, and while it was never an easy negotiation and neither side got everything that they wanted, I think we are all pleased with the outcome. I want to thank all the members of the conference committee, with a special thanks to Senators DURBIN and NELSON, who are strong supporters of the conference report.

Let me highlight a few things in this bill that I am so proud of:

The bill creates and significantly funds two new programs: No. 1, the National Highway Freight Program, which will improve goods movement; and No. 2, the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program, a competitive grants program to support major projects.

It provides \$199 million to help commuter railroads install positive train control. It includes the Raechel and Jaqueline Houck Safe Rental Car Act, to protect consumers from leasing unsafe recalled rental vehicles. This cause has been incredibly important to me. I have worked tirelessly to get this safety provision into law. It will save lives in the future and is an example of the positive things we can do to prevent families from suffering from tragedies resulting from defective rental cars in the future.

I have been working for years to pass a long-term transportation bill, because our Nation's aging infrastructure needs robust investment to keep us competitive in the global marketplace. Our country has over 61,000 structurally deficient bridges and 50 percent of our Nation's roads are in less than good condition. More than 30,000 people die from traffic accidents each year.

The passage of MAP-21, for which I chaired the conference committee in 2012, provided 2 years of certainty and made key innovations for transportation.

Now, the FAST Act, which increases highway and transit funding, will enable our State and local governments to make new investments to improve our roads, bridges, and transit systems, which will improve safety, increase mobility, and keep goods moving efficiently. Improving our transportation infrastructure should not be a partisan issue, and I thank Leader MCCONNELL and Senator INHOFE for working closely with me to do the right thing for our country.

This entire process has been about trust, teamwork, and persistence, and I couldn't be more proud of what we have accomplished.

I would like to thank all of the staff that played an important role in this bill. As I have said, getting to this point has been a process that would

make the workings of a sausage factory look appealing in comparison.

Mr. President, I know it is late, and I know we are all exhausted, but you have to mark a moment. I think this bill was such a monumental effort and the staffs that we are mentioning—Senator INHOFE is right—they were working constantly. The reason I know is that I called them constantly.

Senator INHOFE is right again. I called my staff; I called his staff; I called Senator THUNE's staff. I called everybody's staff. Right? I drove them crazy.

One time my little granddaughter was there, and I was getting into a bit of an altercation with a Member from the House, and I whispered to my granddaughter: Tell him to help your grandmother.

She got on the phone and said: Please help my grandmother. She had no idea.

The gentleman on the other end said: Oh, boy, you are tough. OK. We got through that night all right.

I am going to also thank the House family who helped us write the Safe Rental Car Act.

In closing, I am going to read these names on my team: Bettina Poirier, David Napoliello, Andrew Dohrman, Tyler Rushforth, Jason Albritton, Ted Illston, Mary Kerr, Kate Gilman, Colin MacCarthy, and Kathryn Bacher.

From Senator INHOFE's team, I have to mention them again: Alex Hergott, Ryan Jackson, Shant Boyajian, Susan Bodine, Andrew Neely, and Chaya Koffman.

For Leader MCCONNELL: Neil Chatterjee, Hazen Marshall, and many others.

For the Banking Committee staff, I want to thank Mark Powden, Shannon Hines, Jennifer Deci, and Homer Carlisle.

For Senator NELSON: Kim Lipsky, Devon Barnhart, Matt Kelly, and Brandon Kaufman.

For Senator THUNE: Dave Schweitert, Adrian Arnakis, Allison Cullen, and Patrick Fuchs.

We built trust, we worked together, and we forged real friendships. I will never forget this as long as I live. I am grateful to everyone.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

REMEMBERING GOVERNOR OLENE WALKER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute today to Governor Olene Walker, a woman beloved in my home State of Utah and regarded across the

Nation as a model of civility and selfless service. Governor Walker passed away last Saturday from causes incidental to age. In her 85 years of life, she led with compassion and humility, earning the respect and admiration of everyone she served.

Governor Walker's life was one of humble service, and her modest background made her rise in politics all the more impressive. Raised in rural Utah, she developed her trademark work ethic on the family farm and spent much of her childhood milking cows, hauling hay, and harvesting sugar beets. Both as a young woman working in her family's fields and as a Governor serving the people of Utah, no task was ever below Olene—she was always willing to do whatever was necessary to get the job done and to help those in need.

As a State legislator, a Lieutenant Governor, and a Governor, Olene was steadfast in her commitment to help society's most vulnerable, especially small children. Her work in the area of health care reform precipitated the establishment of our State's Children Health Insurance Program, which helps provide medical insurance for Utah's underprivileged youth. After becoming Utah's first female Governor, she continued her advocacy for children by championing education reform.

Governor Walker's Read With a Child Early Literacy Initiative was essential to her reform efforts. This program sought to improve childhood literacy by encouraging parents to read with their kids for at least 20 minutes every day. The initiative's focus on the family speaks to a simple truth: meaningful societal change doesn't begin in the bustling chambers of Congress but in the quiet solitude of the home, through the daily interactions between parent and child. As a former homemaker and as a mother of seven, Olene understood that healthy homes lead to a healthy society. This belief influenced many of her pro-family policies as Governor.

Perhaps more than anyone I know, Governor Walker exemplified the teaching that the greatest among us is the servant of all. She often eschewed the trappings of public office and even refused to use a driver. After leaving the Governorship, Olene volunteered to serve as the primary president for her local church congregation. This humble position was a significant departure from her role as Utah's chief executive. Instead of negotiating with legislators and managing State agencies, Olene led dozens of little children in song and prayer, teaching them about the words of Christ and his early apostles. Anyone preoccupied with prestige or positions of power would surely consider this new responsibility a demotion, but Olene wasn't one of those people. She never concerned herself with titles, standing, or prominence; she cared only about serving others in whatever capacity she could.

And she served until the very end. Even after retiring from office, Olene

remained in the public sphere and continued to advocate for education reform. She was also active in ecclesiastical service and would eventually serve a 2-year mission in New York City for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She was equally engaged in academia and was instrumental in establishing the Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics and Public Service at Weber State University. In addition to hosting public forums, the institute helps students find jobs and internships in government and encourages women to become involved in politics.

Through her trailblazing example, Governor Walker leaves a legacy of leadership that is sure to inspire generations of young Americans. With her passing, we have lost not only an exemplary stateswoman but also a loving mother and a friend. I am deeply grateful for my association with Olene Walker. I consider myself lucky to have known Olene and even luckier to have served alongside her. Elaine and I send our deepest condolences to the Walker family. May God comfort them, and may He comfort all of us as we mourn the loss of an exceptional woman.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT STIVERS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a good friend of mine and the Kentucky Senate president, Robert Stivers, for the honor he recently received of being named one of the country's top nine public officials of the year by *Governing* magazine. Senator Stivers certainly deserves this recognition, as he has led the Kentucky Senate admirably since his elevation to the president's post in 2013.

Senator Stivers has served in the Kentucky Senate since 1997. He represents the 25th District in eastern Kentucky, which includes parts of Clay, Knox, Lee, Owsley, Whitley, and Wolfe Counties. Like myself, Robert is a proud graduate of both the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville. Before becoming senate president in 2013, he served as the senate's majority floor leader from 2009 to 2012.

Senator Stivers is perfectly suited for his leadership role, as he is a man who naturally knows how to build consensus and coalitions. He remains a practicing attorney in his hometown of Manchester and is finely tuned in to the needs of his constituents. The Clay County Chamber of Commerce honored Senator Stivers with its Man of the Year award in 2000. In 2002 he received both the AARP Appreciation Award and the Kentucky River Lincoln Club Outstanding Service Award.

Senator Stivers was recognized as one of the top public officials in the country because he has led the Kentucky Senate to pass some very important measures, including a bill to address the growing scourge of heroin and prescription pain pill abuse in our

State. That is an issue I have followed closely over the years, and I can attest firsthand that Senator Stivers has been a real champion in working to find a solution.

Senator Stivers also led the senate to pass a measure providing funding for a new cancer research center at the University of Kentucky. This new facility will prove to be of immeasurable benefit to the people of Kentucky and also helps establish the University of Kentucky as one of the region's top research universities, which will attract more talent and funding to the Commonwealth.

I would ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers on this honor, and I thank him for his service to the people of our State. Those of us in Kentucky who have watched him at work have known for a long time that he is a talented and energetic legislator. And he is a great public servant on behalf of the people of Kentucky.

The Lexington Herald-Leader recently published an article detailing Senator Stivers' recognition by *Governing* magazine. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Lexington Herald-Leader, Nov. 17, 2015]

MAGAZINE NAMES KENTUCKY SENATE PRESIDENT ROBERT STIVERS A TOP PUBLIC OFFICIAL IN NATION

(By Jack Brammer)

FRANKFORT—Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers has been named one of the country's nine public officials of the year by *Governing* magazine.

Stivers, R-Manchester, was nominated for the award by the magazine's editors. The magazine has honored individual state and local government officials for their accomplishments every year since 1994.

The publication commends Stivers for his bipartisan work since assuming the role of Senate president in 2013.

Landmark legislation that has passed during Stivers' presidency include bills to address abuse of prescription drugs and heroin, and providing funding for a new cancer research center at the University of Kentucky.

"It is an honor to receive this award on behalf of our work in the legislature," Stivers said in a statement. "We are fortunate to have so many dedicated servants in the Kentucky General Assembly who were willing to put aside politics and do what was best for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. While there is still plenty of work to be done, I am very thankful to my colleagues and staff for their work on significant pieces of legislation. It has been a great year."

Stivers was appointed this year as the incoming chairman of the Southern Legislative Conference, which is to hold its annual meeting in Lexington in 2016. Stivers also will be chairman of the Council on State Governments in 2018.

Stivers will travel to Washington, D.C., next month to receive the award. He represents the 25th District, which encompasses Clay, Knox, Lee, Owsley, Whitley and Wolfe counties.