

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “2 days” and insert “3 days”.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4869 TO AMENDMENT NO. 4868

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 4869 to amendment No. 4868.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “3 days” and insert “4 days”.

#### TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the following conference report, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to 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.

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. BOYD R. BUSER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate a distinguished Kentuckian and exceptional physician who brings great honor to the Bluegrass State. Dr. Boyd R. Buser, doctor of osteopathic medicine, is the vice president for health affairs and dean for the University of Pikeville's Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine, or UP-KYCOM. He is also the president-elect for the American Osteopathic Association, AOA, and will be installed as that organization's president next month at its next annual meeting in Chicago.

Dr. Buser earned his osteopathic medical degree in 1981 and has served

as a physician for 35 years. Originally from Iowa, he completed an osteopathic internship in Rhode Island before proudly calling Kentucky his home. He is board certified in family practice, as well as osteopathic manipulative medicine.

He has taught extensively around the world for the past 15 years and has represented the American osteopathic profession in the World Health Organization. He is an officer of the board of directors of the Osteopathic International Alliance. He has been a member of the AOA's board of trustees since 2004 and has served the AOA in a number of other capacities as well before assuming the mantle of president.

Dr. Buser has been recognized by the medical community with many awards for his achievements. In 1994, the AOA, along with the American Osteopathic Foundation, named him the osteopathic profession's “Educator of the Year.” The Maine Osteopathic Association presented him with the Roswell Bates Award in 1994 and the Distinguished Service Award in 1996 and 2007. He is also a current member of the Kentucky Institute of Medicine and the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure.

A fellow of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, Dr. Buser is past president of the American Academy of Osteopathy, AAO. He is also a past chair of the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners, NBOME, and was a founding member of the board of directors of the Osteopathic International Alliance.

Dr. Buser was the recipient of the A.T. Still Medallion of Honor from the AAO in 2010. He also received the Riland Medal for Public Service from the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2013, as well as the Santucci Award for outstanding contributions to the mission of NBOME. In 2015, he received the Pioneer of Osteopathic Medicine Award from the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Kentucky is very proud that Dr. Buser is the second dean from UP-KYCOM to serve as AOA's president; the first was Dr. John Strosnider, the founding dean of UP-KYCOM, in 2006. UP-KYCOM was founded in 1997, and since then, more than 1,000 physicians have graduated from that institution. Nearly 70 percent of them serve in primary care, frequently in rural areas. UP-KYCOM is supplying doctors to the regions of Kentucky and the Nation who need them the most.

I want to praise Dr. Buser for his many awards and accomplishments and thank him for bringing his talents and his expertise to Kentucky. The Bluegrass State is pleased to reap the benefits from his efforts to heal and comfort the sick. It is truly an honor for him to ascend to the presidency of the American Osteopathic Association, and we are glad to see him in that position. I know his colleagues at UP-KYCOM are equally pleased for him, and I wish him great success in his new role.

#### 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF KHOBAR TOWERS BOMBING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, June 25 marked 20 years since the devastating bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. This horrifying and evil act killed 19 U.S. airmen and wounded nearly 500 others, 372 of whom were American.

The Khobar Towers were part of a housing complex where American, British, and French troops lived. The complex housed nearly 2,000 military members. The night of the attack, U.S. Air Force SSGT Alfred Guerrero was on patrol and witnessed a gasoline truck drive up to the complex perimeter fence. The driver parked the gasoline truck and then immediately sprinted to the waiting vehicle where he met two other assailants who were acting as lookouts. The car then sped off. Sergeant Guerrero only had a few moments to respond, but tried bravely to begin an evacuation of the building. Tragically, there was not enough time before the truck bomb exploded.

A member of my U.S. Capitol Police security detail, Special Agent Steve Sterling, was in an adjacent building when the attack took place. Steve, an airman first class at the time, was in the lobby of his building, making a call to the United States, when the blast erupted. He was thrown from his seat, but protected from further damage by the plywood boards surrounding the phone booth. Every other person in the lobby of his building was cut and bleeding from the debris and broken shards of glass. Later, Steve learned that four of his coworkers, whom he had just left only moments prior, were severely injured.

After waiting a few seconds to get their bearings, Steve and the other servicemembers who suffered only minor injuries rushed to the blast site. They were shocked to see the entire face of building No. 131 completely ripped off. Immediately, Steve and others started pulling people from the fallen rubble and setting up a triage. They worked through the night and into the early morning. They continued to sift through piles of debris for several days after.

If it were not for the brave efforts of the servicemembers like Steve Sterling, perhaps other lives would have been lost. Today, as we honor those who were lost and injured in the attack, I honor all of the military personnel who responded. I thank them for their selflessness and courage.

The explosion caused by the truck bomb was so great, it was heard from more than 20 miles away and left a hole in the ground nearly 35 feet deep. It was discovered later that this bombing had been planned for 3 years. We also learned it was carried out by a militant group that sought solely to target members of our military. This disgusting act was one of the most brazen attacks on American military personnel. Sadly, it was not the last.

It is important that we do not forget the victims whose lives were lost as a

result because their bravery and service deserves our recognition. That is why I was pleased to support the resolution honoring these gallant men and women, ensuring they are never forgotten. There will never be a way to predict and prevent all such acts of violence, but we can take comfort in knowing that we have the best and most valiant individuals standing on the frontline.

#### THE "MERCİ TRAIN" IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermonters needn't look far to see evidence of the deep French roots running through our State. From towns such as Montpelier and Isle La Motte, to the apt naming of Vert Mont, the Green Mountain State, generations of Vermonters were raised in homes where the native language was not English, but French. Deep ties to our neighbors to the north in Canada continue this rich culture in Vermont communities today.

It is no wonder then that I have such strong memories of stories about the "Merci Train" in Vermont. In the aftermath of World War II, Vermonters, like people across the country, rallied together to provide supplies for war-torn communities throughout France and Italy. Vermonters sent food and other gifts, through Burlington and Rutland, down to Boston, where they became part of "the Friendship Train," a convoy of rail cars that traveled through France as part of one of the more remarkable humanitarian efforts after World War II.

I well remember my mother and father bringing my older brother and my youngest sister and me to see it. As children, we may not have fully understood what it meant, but for years thereafter, I would go past it, being more and more aware. As a Montpelier native, I join with everybody else with in having pride having that the Merci Train was there.

The Merci Train was France's response, a year later, thanking Americans for their support. Filled with trinkets from French citizens, crafts made by school aged children, and other items, cars from the Merci Train traveled to each State. One arrived in Vermont on February 10, 1949. Its arrival was heralded by the playing of our national anthem, as well as the French revolutionary hymn "La Marseillaise" by the Montpelier High School Band. Its contents, sincere expressions of appreciation from French families, were unpacked and distributed to Vermonters.

While the Merci Train's freight represented the gratitude of a nation, the railroad car itself held the history of two World Wars. Displayed behind the Vermont Supreme Court in Montpelier for a number of years, the car originally served as a railroad boxcar to haul military cargo. Often referred to as "40 and 8s," in reference to their 40-

man or 8-horse capacities, the cars regularly transported American soldiers throughout Europe. Upon the car's arrival in Vermont, it was displayed temporarily behind Vermont's Supreme Court building, where it remained until the 1950s. Removed to the Vermont State Police headquarters, it faced deterioration. A movement in the 1980s—with the support of veterans, private companies, the Vermont National Guard, and "40 and 8" enthusiasts—led to the car's restoration. Today it remains preserved and on display at the Vermont National Guard Library and Museum, a fitting tribute to the strong ties between Vermont and France and another window into the fascinating history on which our great State is built.

I ask unanimous consent that the May 30 article from the Times Argus, "The Merci Train in Vermont," by Paul Heller, be printed in the RECORD. There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Times Argus, May 30, 2016]

#### THE MERCİ TRAIN IN VERMONT

(By Paul Heller)

Local radio celebrity Bob Bannon was master of ceremonies as 500 Vermonters gathered at the railroad station in Montpelier to receive a remarkable gift from the people of France.

The present was an antique boxcar filled with gifts from ordinary French citizens—a way of saying "thank you" or "Merci" for American assistance during and after World War II.

A similar gift had been presented to each of the 48 states with an additional one for Washington, D.C. The convoy had been dubbed the "Merci Train," and the old railroad cars known as "40 and 8s" were carried to their destinations by rail.

The one that arrived in Montpelier on February 10, 1949, had been delivered on an American railroad flatcar and was opened in a ceremony that had started with a "Vermont Welcomes France" breakfast. Later, at the train station, the Montpelier High School band played "The Star Spangled Banner" and "La Marseillaise." The Montpelier V.F.W. post provided a color guard carrying the flags of the U.S., France, and Canada.

Officially known as "Le Train de la Reconnaissance de Française," the "Merci Train" was a response to the U.S. railroad convoy a year earlier that had made a similar trip the other way.

That 1947 version was called "The Friendship Train" and had made stops at various large U.S. cities where the cars were filled with food and other gifts from ordinary Americans to offer relief to war-ravaged France and Italy. The Friendship Train was the inspiration of nationally syndicated columnist Drew Pearson, who led the humanitarian effort that put individual Americans in a direct charitable relationship with their counterparts in France.

It is estimated that relief supplies valued at \$40,000,000 were sent to France and Italy in this fashion. Although the Friendship Train did not come to Vermont for donations, the Burlington Free Press was careful to assert that the Green Mountain State was worthy of this gift from France.

Many Vermonters may feel that the Merci Train, bearing gifts from the French people for the people of Vermont, is entirely a one-

way transaction. They remember that the Friendship Train, which went from coast to coast picking up food gifts for the hungry people of Italy and France, did not come to Vermont.

Thus it might appear that Vermont is being thanked for something it didn't do. But while the train did not come here, some Vermonters made their contributions just the same. Food gifts from different parts of the state were sent through Burlington and Rutland down to Boston, where they made up part of the Friendship Train.

Of course, many Vermonters served in the armed forces to help secure an Allied victory in Europe. France, recognizing the sacrifices of all Americans to save their republic, gave a similar gift to each state in the union.

The Vermont car was unpacked and gifts distributed by Earl Newton, director of the Vermont Historical Society, who was sensitive to the need for equity. Vermont legislators took token gifts back to their towns and many items, when appropriate, were given to high school French classes.

The gifts were sincere expressions of appreciation such as small knickknacks that a French family might own. There were many pieces made by French schoolchildren who also included toys and dolls in the shipment.

Vermont Governor Gibson, reported the Burlington Free Press, accepted the car for Vermont and said "the gifts it contained were great in spiritual value and that the people of Vermont would accept them in that sense." He added, "the gifts would be accepted in a spirit of humility and friendship and that the people of Vermont would continue to march shoulder to shoulder with the people of France so that liberty, peace, and freedom might continue for all time."

Many of the gifts included letters and drawings from French schoolchildren, and they were clearly intended for children in the United States. The letters were often addressed, "Chers petits amies d'Amerique..." (Dear little friends of America). These gifts received in Montpelier were mostly sent to museums and schools throughout the state.

While the gifts were mostly sentimental tokens of friendship, it was the railroad car itself that was to prove to be the most unique and lasting legacy of the "Merci Train." The old railroad car, small by modern standards, was informally referred to as a "40 and 8."

Manuel Conley's history of the specialized cars noted, "During two wars they served France as dual purpose railroad boxcars hauling the military cargoes stenciled on their sides 'HOMMES 40 CHEVAUX 8'". A more precise colloquialism might have been "40 or 8" as the designation referred to the cars' capacity to carry 40 men or eight horses in an era when the horse-cavalry was an essential part of a military force.

During the First World War American doughboys were carried to the front in just such cars and veterans of the Great War had vivid memories of that unique mode of transport. According to Conley, Americans were alternately enchanted and disgusted, intrigued and infuriated by the little dual-purpose cars. Sometimes they were just confused.

In "The Doughboys: The story of the AEF," Laurence Stallings tells of one sergeant who reported to his leader: "I got all my 40 artillerymen in the boxcar, lieutenant. But if you try to pull eight of our horses in, somebody's gonna be trampled to death!"

Conley notes that the cars had been updated for their new purpose in the "Merci Train." "All had been repaired, freshly painted, and decorated with plaques bearing the coats of arms of the 40 provinces of France. Across their sides, upon tricolored