

competition and leadership in aviation, increases safety in the National Airspace System, and strengthens customer service practices across the commercial aviation sector.

The legislation delivers very strong support to our rural communities in Michigan and across the Nation by continuing the Essential Air Service, or EAS, Program. This program drives economic development and tourism while also connecting local residents to world-class healthcare. I will never stop fighting to ensure that Michigan's EAS airports—from Muskegon, to Houghton/Hancock, to Alpena—get the funding they need to continue to serve their communities.

In addition to driving sustained investment in rural communities, I support this long-term reauthorization because it gave me an opportunity to address a number of critical challenges that are facing our country. This bill includes provisions I authored that will help prepare our students for the high-tech jobs of today and tomorrow, secure public spaces in our airports, and remove the outdated Federal requirement that airports use firefighting foams containing fluorinated chemicals that contaminate groundwater and are causing disastrous human health effects across the country.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 will improve the competitiveness of our Nation's workforce by clearing the way for our students and educators to use unmanned aircraft systems, or UAS, for research, education, and job training. Whether this technology is used for critical infrastructure or boosting crop yields at our farms, UAS technology will create tens of thousands of new jobs in the coming years, and we need American students and workers ready to take advantage of that. That is why I worked across the aisle with Senator MORAN to introduce the Higher Education Unmanned Air Systems Modernization Act and include it in this long-term FAA bill.

This provision has the support of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Association of American Universities, and dozens of other colleges and universities all across our Nation.

Our brightest minds will have the ability to design, refine, and fly UAS to prepare our country for the safe integration of UAS into our National Airspace System.

In my home State of Michigan, Alpena Community College has created a UAS pilot training program that complements existing certificate programs, like the utility technology certificate, making their graduates even more competitive.

This will support job creation across the income spectrum, as our Nation's workforce will be able to get the training they need to operate these systems both safely and efficiently.

Ultimately, whether we are talking about UAS, passenger planes in the air, or travelers making their way through

the airport, this is all about safety. In recent years, we have seen high-profile attacks at airports around the world but also in places like Flint, MI. These attacks have demonstrated the vulnerabilities of heavily trafficked public areas outside of security screening, such as baggage claim and pickup and dropoff areas.

I heard from our international airport in Detroit and others across the country that current airport funding streams often cannot be used for security projects in these public spaces. Their need for greater flexibility for airport infrastructure improvements led me and my colleague Senator GARDNER to introduce the bipartisan Secure Airport Public Spaces Act. This legislation would increase safety and security for airport passengers and visitors outside of the TSA screening areas. A critical provision of our bill was incorporated into this reauthorization bill that will now allow airports to use Airport Improvement Program funds on state-of-the-art surveillance cameras in these public areas, which will help monitor, prevent, and respond to potential attacks at airports across our Nation.

Finally, I would like to discuss what could be our Nation's defining public health challenge for generations—a group of harmful chemicals known as PFAS. The PFAS class is a group of over 4,700 manmade chemicals that have been used nationwide and internationally. These chemicals do not break down in the human body or in the environment, and they can accumulate over time and cause a great deal of harm. We already know that there are several health effects associated with exposure to certain PFAS. A few examples include compromised immune system function, cancers, endocrine disruption, and cognitive effects.

I have listened to families exposed to PFAS in Michigan, but PFAS are not just a Michigan issue. We know that there are over 170 sites in 40 States that are contaminated with PFAS. PFAS are so pervasive that it is estimated that up to 110 million Americans could have these chemicals in their water.

PFAS chemicals have been used for decades in a wide range of consumer products, including textiles, paper products, and cookware. In addition to all of these uses, they have also been used in firefighting foams for decades. These foams have been used on military bases and in our commercial airports. They have been used near businesses and neighborhoods, near ground water and surface water, near lakes and streams.

Last week, I worked with Senator RAND PAUL to convene a hearing in our Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee that addressed the Federal Government's role in PFAS. We heard firsthand about the impact of this public health crisis on community members, firefighters, and veterans. Not only have these foams containing

PFAS been used for decades, we are still requiring their use at American airports even as safe alternatives are now being developed and deployed abroad.

While there is a lot of work to be done related to remediation, human health research, filter technology, and more, we must stop making this problem worse. This is why I worked with Senators SULLIVAN, STABENOW, RUBIO, SHAHEEN, GILLIBRAND, and HASSAN to lead a commonsense addition to this FAA bill.

Our bipartisan provision gives airports the option to use fluorine-free foams. I also appreciate Congressman KILDEE for leading this effort in the House of Representatives.

Using fluorine-free foams is not a novel idea, but it is an idea whose time has come. Over 70 airports around the world are already using fluorine-free foams that have passed the most challenging of tests, and they have seen real success in combating fires. These airports include major international hubs such as Dubai, London Heathrow, Manchester, and Copenhagen. Every major airport in Australia has already made this transition.

It is past time that we catch up, and I am happy too that this important legislation will finally allow American airports to embrace safe, innovative firefighting technologies and stop using fluorinated foams.

I want to thank Chairman THUNE and Ranking Member NELSON, as well as Leader MCCONNELL and Leader SCHUMER, for their work to pass this important bipartisan legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support this critical long-term FAA reauthorization that will help keep PFAS out of our water. It will help drive investment in our Nation's workforce, and it will help ensure that our airports and skies are safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

TRIBUTE TO SSG RONALD J. SHURER

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the FAA reauthorization bill. Before I do that, I would like to take a moment to recognize a graduate of Rogers High School in Puyallup, WA. SSG Ronald J. Shurer II, who received the Medal of Honor yesterday for his selfless heroism in Afghanistan.

When he heard wounded members of his team were trapped on a hill, he didn't hesitate. In the face of heavy enemy fire, Staff Sergeant Shurer shielded three wounded teammates with his own body and helped them reach safety.

I congratulate Staff Sergeant Shurer for his heroism and bravery and his sacrifice, and I would like to congratulate him and his family on his receiving this honor. We in Washington are very proud of Staff Sergeant Shurer.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. President, turning to the FAA bill, which I hope we are going to be

considering very shortly, I am pleased that the Senate is looking at a 5-year reauthorization.

It wasn't that long ago that we were talking about short-term extensions and didn't know if we could get to this point of clearing the rest of these issues. I would like to thank my colleagues Chairman THUNE, Ranking Member NELSON, and Aviation Subcommittee Chairman BLUNT for helping get us to this point.

The work we have done on this legislation is so important because it is helping U.S. commercial aviation remain the safest and most secure in the world and to improve the traveling public's experience.

Just like so many other reauthorizations, this reflects an agreement by Congress on the need to focus on safety and security, to implement the latest and greatest technologies, and to increase the use of bomb-sniffing dogs to help the flying public feel more secure and to move quickly through our airports.

This legislation recognizes the values of the latest technologies across many aspects of the aviation sector from NextGen—which allows us to fly more efficiently—to expanded use of unmanned aerial vehicle systems, to new TSA equipment that, as I said, will help us move through security lines more efficiently and help make us safer.

While we need to keep on working to address infrastructure needs at our crowded airports, I can tell you most specifically that, for the Pacific Northwest, where we have seen some of the fastest growth in air transportation and demand by the public in recent years, this 5-year reauthorization does provide the FAA with the certainty it needs to use its Airport Improvement Program to invest in long-term projects that will help us increase capacity at large and small airports.

Again, I can't tell you how important this is for airports all over the State of Washington. Many of us know that about 90 percent of businesses are housed within about 10 miles of an airport. So the investment in the airport and airport infrastructure is an investment in our economy for the future. These projects in this bill, like the new runway that will be completed next year at Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport in eastern Washington with \$100 million in Federal funding, gives communities the tools they need to keep that economy growing.

I can tell you, it is growing. With WSU and other institutions in the region, it is helping grow and attract some of the best technology in Next Generation Energy. The fact that the airport is able to expand helps all of us in the region grow.

The Federal funding that will continue to be provided in this bill is critical for airports to increase their capacity and help our economy. Under programs reauthorized in this legislation, Sea-Tac is currently completing a

\$14 million runway and taxi reconstruction. Spokane has received \$15 million for airfield improvements, and airports from Everett to Walla Walla to Winthrop have each received millions of dollars through these programs to keep their facilities up to date.

The Tri-Cities Airport in Pasco was awarded \$7 million to install an inline baggage screening system in their new terminal. Yes, our airports depend on to continue to move forward on FAA and infrastructure investment.

This legislation also expands the Small Community Air Service Development Program, which provides grants to communities to help them attract and maintain critical air service by creating marketing programs and providing incentives to airlines. This has been a great tool for our State, including airports in Walla Walla, Spokane, Yakima, Wenatchee, and Pasco, as they have used these resources to help grow service. Once service is established, it is easy to maintain. Why? Because they have helped get the carrier and the traffic and they can see that it can be sustained.

The United States has the best aviation safety record in the world, and the FAA's oversight and certification procedures are critical in maintaining that. This bill continues with making sure that those procedures remain strong.

The bill helps us with what are called contract air traffic control towers in making sure that small communities that are working to retain air service can do so by making sure that their towers remain in operation. These contract towers provide a key layer of safety at smaller airports and in the region. Places like Yakima, Wenatchee, Spokane, Bellingham, Renton, and Walla Walla will not be saddled with the responsibility for these contract towers but will receive support so that they, too, can handle the demand of air transportation. Contract towers handle about 28 percent of ATC operations, yet they account for about 14 percent of the FAA's tower operations budget.

The bill recognizes the important role, also, that flight attendants play in ensuring cabin safety by making sure they receive adequate rest. This legislation finally puts them on par with our pilots. It says that they have to have their 10 hours of rest, as well, so that they can function and continue to help us with the traveling public.

The bill preserves access to important safety tools. It bans the FAA from removing contract weather observers from airports for the next several years. Why is this so important? Because at airports with changing conditions where we need human observation of critical weather measurements, this helps us maintain safety. In places like Spokane, WA, where conditions can change quickly and freezing conditions can be quite common, this helps us maintain safety.

The bill also takes important steps toward securing airports and airplanes

with reauthorization of the Transportation Security Administration.

We know that there is no better tool in our airports today to helping us make sure they operate safely and securely by having explosive detecting K-9 units. That is why I was proud to lead a provision in the bill that will help us expand the use of bomb-detecting K-9s for screening our passengers and protecting the public at our airports. What we are seeing is that security lines at our airports move much more rapidly when these K-9s are present.

Yes, they are a deterrent in and of themselves, and they help speed up lines. But they also are there to detect the use of explosives or other materials, and they are doing an unbelievable job. That is why this provision allows for larger airports to get more K-9 units certified by TSA and work with them to address long lines at our airports.

In the Northwest, we have seen that these K-9s can do unbelievable things to help us. In fact, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport has been one of the fastest growing airports for the last several years, and the K-9s have helped us through these checkpoints in the passenger screening process where they can screen almost 60 percent more passengers per hour than a checkpoint without K-9s.

It is so important that this legislation helps us get more K-9s trained and more coordination between airports and TSA as these new tools are improved. We are so happy that it is included in this legislation.

We also give smaller airports more tools to improve security. The bill contains a program to implement exit lane technology at small hub airports. It contains a \$55 million authorization to reimburse airports for deploying local law enforcement officers to help maintain public areas in large and small airports.

These tools are also important because our airports have had more and more responsibility; yet we need them to operate efficiently and effectively. At the same time, we are trying to improve the flying experience. More people are flying than ever before, and airplanes and airports are becoming more cramped and chaotic.

This FAA bill is set to make sure that there are minimum dimensions for passenger seats. It raises the bar on some of the other safety improvements to make sure that the traveling public and disabled passengers are treated with dignity and respect.

The bill also requires airlines to provide prompt refunds so that passengers are paid in a timely fashion when they are due a refund.

It also improves other technology in unmanned air systems, an increased use of important commercial, scientific, and public safety issues that are now at the advent of what we see with drone applications.

These are so important because we want to move forward with our Coast

Guard, with our Forest Service, with transportation, using information and data to help us do our jobs better. This important piece of legislation helps us make sure we are improving safety and oversight by the right amount for these new systems that will be part of this package.

I am so glad to have worked with my colleagues on this very broad bipartisan piece of legislation. I can't tell you how important aviation is to the State of Washington. We are a big aviation-manufacturing State. Yes, we like to build and sell airplanes, but we also know that, as our economy has grown, our airports are a key tool, as they are in any State, to continue to grow and continue to manage the challenges of air transportation.

This bill is the right tool for many airports across the State of Washington and across the Nation to continue to grow, to continue to manage that population growth, and ensure safety and efficiency.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation. There are many more things we need to do, but this is a good down payment for the next 5 years.

I thank Chairman THUNE and Ranking Member NELSON for getting us to this point today.

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

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about a few good things that have happened in Washington this week. At a time when people are looking at Washington and wondering whether things are getting done, let me just suggest, on the floor this week, we are going to pass landmark legislation that will deal with a crisis we have in our States—every single one of us—and that is the opioid issue. I will talk about that in a minute.

FUNDING FOR NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. President, first, let me mention that today, in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and with a vote of 19 to 4, we passed legislation to help our national parks. It is historic in the sense that it is probably the most funding we have ever put against the long-term maintenance problems at our parks.

We have more visitors at our parks than ever. Yet we have crumbling roads and bridges and water systems. We have, literally, campgrounds and other areas that are closed off because of the lack of funding for these longer term projects, which is the deferred maintenance backlog—about \$12 billion now. We have come up with a bipartisan solution to try to address that by

using some of the oil and gas revenues, onshore and offshore, from Federal lands. It is an example of how we are moving things forward.

USMCA

Mr. President, finally, I am encouraged that the President and his team have negotiated an agreement to add Canada, along with Mexico, to a new North American trade agreement. They are not calling it NAFTA; they have changed the name to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. I think this is going to be a step forward. I have now looked at the summary from it. We don't have the details yet—and I, of course, want to see the final details—but I think it has two general advantages for us.

One is that it will encourage more production in North America of things like automobiles because you have to have a higher American content—Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. content now—in automobiles than you did under the old agreement. You will have more cars being built in America and North America as well as auto parts. I think that is good.

I also think there are other things in the agreement that will help to encourage production in the United States because it will level the playing field more with our country. It does things with regard to Canada that are long overdue to try to keep it from putting protection policies in place on its agriculture products, especially its dairy products. So, when it sends powdered milk to us now, it can't take advantage of the subsidies it is providing for its milk producers, as an example. It lets our dairy farmers be able to compete on a more level playing field.

Those are the kinds of things that are in the agreement. I, again, look forward to seeing the entire agreement. I think having a North American compact that is updated is good because the NAFTA agreement was 24 years old. We have modernized it and put new labor standards in place, as an example.

The second, again, is to level the playing field further with these countries in our region that are our allies and, therefore, should not be viewed as national security threats. We shouldn't be putting tariffs in place on them on a national security basis, which we were doing and threatening to do more of, including on autos under section 232, it is called. We now have better trade agreements with these countries that are our allies but that also had some barriers in place for our exports. We need to be sure their imports are going to be fairly traded in this country. So it is positive, I think, to have this agreement.

Now, frankly, it enables us as a North American market to be more effective in dealing with some of the trade disputes we have had with other parts of the world, most notably with China, with which we do have a lot of unfair trade going on. China is not playing by the rules often, and this

helps us to have Canada and Mexico with us to be able to address those issues with China, as an example.

Those are some of the things that are happening this week that I am happy about, and I think we are making some progress.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. President, let me go back to what is going to be voted on, on this floor, I am told, sometime tomorrow. Probably tomorrow afternoon, this Senate will take up legislation that has now been passed in the House and passed in the Senate. There has been a conference committee between the two bodies, and it has come up with a final product. I think the final product has a lot of good things in it that will help push back against this opioid epidemic that is growing in our country.

On my way to Washington yesterday, I went by a memorial service for a young man who had died of an opioid overdose. I had known him and have known his family for a long time. It strikes close to home for pretty much everybody in this Chamber, I am sure, and for pretty much everybody who is listening. When we have our tele-townhall meetings and I ask this question, which I do regularly—I had two tele-townhall meetings last month—"Have you been affected by the opioid issue," most people say yes.

In fact, in parts of our State, in Southeastern Ohio, where we had a tele-townhall meeting recently, two-thirds of the people on the call said, yes, they were directly affected. That is because, sadly, this issue has grown to the point where last year 72,000 Americans lost their lives to the opioid epidemic. That is more people than we lost in the entire Vietnam war in 1 year. That many people died from opioid overdoses in 1 year. It is a grim statistic, and it is a record level.

Although Congress has done some good things in the last couple of years in passing legislation to help, those legislative efforts to have better prevention programs in place, more treatment offered, more longer term recovery programs, more first responders with Narcan—this miracle drug that can reverse the effects of an overdose—that is starting to happen, but it is being overwhelmed with the influx of drugs, particularly this new synthetic form of opioid that is coming into our communities.

It is usually called fentanyl, sometimes it is called carfentanil, but in my home State of Ohio and in other States around the country, this is resulting with a much higher overdose death rate than even the horrible drugs like heroin and the prescription drugs that are causing these opioid addictions—cocaine, methamphetamines, and crystal meth. This drug, fentanyl, is growing and growing rapidly.

I will tell you, in Ohio, we had about a 4,000-percent increase in fentanyl overdose deaths just in the last 5 years. Let me repeat that. There was a 4,000-percent increase in deaths from