

being able to be fully confirmed by this body to do the work that it takes to implement that legislation.

I know this is incredibly important to people across the United States of America because we know how popular that bill was. My colleagues are with me tonight—two members of the Commerce Committee—who worked hard and contributed mightily to the Surface Transportation Act that passed out of the Commerce Committee in a robust bipartisan fashion to come here to the floor. It was added with other legislation from other committees.

So we are here tonight—myself, my colleague from Montana, who has a State as big as any State in the United States. It probably is the largest State. All I know is it takes me at least an hour to fly over it. So I guarantee you that is a lot of roads, that is a lot of bridges, that is a lot of railroad, that is a lot of infrastructure. If it is not fixed and it is not taken care of, then the Montana economy is hurt.

My colleague from Wisconsin is here, and she played a major role in the infrastructure bill as well. She made sure that we focused on at-grade crossings and the safety of our rail system. Why? Because we have to move products from the Midwest to reach Asian markets. If they can't get there because they are stuck in congestion, then, we aren't going to be competitive as a nation.

It is ridiculous that we are in this position tonight, ridiculous that there are dozens of nominees from the Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce that the majority of our colleagues support, but they are being held up by one or two people who don't want to see them move through the process.

I am talking about nominees that are part of the Federal Railroad Administration—the Administrator. We are giving a bunch of money to the Federal Railroad Administration so they can put grants out, authorize this new program for at-grade crossings to improve the speed of moving our product, and people don't want the FRA, or the Federal Railroad Administration, to have an Administrator. I don't know what possibly could be wrong with that.

Someone doesn't want us to have the CFO for the Department of Transportation. The CFO—you don't want us to have a CFO? How political could the CFO of the Department of Transportation be? I guarantee you, not very political. The CFO is a person who is going to make sure that we spend the money correctly, administer the new programs as they get set up, and make sure the money goes out the door. It is hard to imagine a lot of money will go out the door of the Department of Transportation if we don't have a CFO.

There are other people here that are part of the transportation system on analysis. There are people I am pretty sure my colleague from Montana will talk about.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration—why? Again, because I

guarantee you there are a lot of trucks in Montana. There is a lot of moving of product. You have to have trucking safety, and you have to have help in administering that. And if you have to have help administering that, then, you need to have an Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

These are basic positions. These are positions that are part of the infrastructure that we need for the Department of Transportation and, as I mentioned, the Department of Commerce. These are issues that are important to us.

Let me just say a few words about Commerce nominees. We have someone who is supposed to do the analysis of industry for the Department of Commerce. We have someone who is supposed to help us with trade and international matters.

I am pretty sure my colleague from Florida, who is objecting to some of these nominees, is going to say: It is about the supply chain.

These are the very people that we need for the supply chain. You need the analysis and the construct of the Department of Commerce to say: These are the problems that we have with the Department moving forward on various issues that we have with a major focus on our infrastructure.

The infrastructure bill provided \$1.2 trillion in funding for transportation, for energy, for disparities that we have in our infrastructure and that has to get spent, and it has to get spent as soon as possible.

Markets in China and India are expected to be worth \$26 trillion by 2030, but some people think: Well, we will just take that money we gave to move ahead on our infrastructure—something that has been dilapidated for a long time.

That is what people don't understand. Over several administrations, our investment in transportation infrastructure fell to less than 1 percent of GDP, and we didn't correct it. The last administration didn't correct it, but this administration came in—a Democratic administration—and said we are going to correct that because economists will tell you that you are not keeping pace if your infrastructure investment is less than 1 percent. Now President Biden is going to get that number up over the next several years, and that is the kind of investment we need to make.

We don't need to slow down because there is a big world economy, and 95 percent of consumers live outside the United States. But, OK, let's just take our sweet time in implementing this bill and getting U.S. products to international markets, when 95 percent of consumers are outside the United States. Let's just take our sweet time because someone wants to object to these nominees—the CFO, the Administrator, these people who have been moved out of committee in a bipartisan fashion.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-a-generation investment that we have to make. But they have to have people over there to make the investment and they have to have people to be fully staffed. And we have to make sure that these important steps that the President is taking on supply chain are met. That is why these issues of working on various logistics of operations, of pricing, of transparency, and overseeing shippers and making sure that some of our largest shippers are committed to moving cargo during off-peak hours are important.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle know how important agricultural products being delivered to market on time is. And we need to make sure that our farmers, our people who have U.S.-manufactured products, like in the State of Wisconsin, are getting a fair deal on their shipping.

And that is why we also have to have the nominee for the Federal Maritime Commission and get somebody on the Commission who is going to hold people accountable to make sure that our products get somewhere safely and securely and in a timely fashion.

So these issues that we are facing on the supply chain are complex. They are not going to be fixed overnight, but they have to have people in the jobs. They have to have people who are going to answer the questions, work together, and to get this done.

So I would ask my colleagues, who I know are going to join me in making several nominations, I ask unanimous consent to consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 315, Karen Jean Hedlund, of Colorado, to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2025; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the Record; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hedlund nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 550, Max Veckich to be the Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2026.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, as my colleague is aware, I have an outstanding request with the Commerce Committee, which

my colleague chairs, for us to hear testimony from Commerce Secretary Raimondo and Transportation Secretary Buttigieg or their Senate-confirmed leadership about the supply chain crisis.

I have been clear that until we hear from these Agency leaders, either in the Commerce Committee or in an open meeting, that I would be holding all Department of Transportation and Department of Commerce nominees from moving forward in an expedited manner.

We have had crisis after crisis due to the failed leadership of President Biden and his appointees. Just look at the inflation crisis caused by the Democrats' reckless spending that is hurting families and putting too many Americans in the position of deciding whether to fill their gas tank, heat their house this winter, or put food on the table.

Just this week, I spoke with a veteran in Land O' Lakes, FL. He is a small business owner, and he has seen prices on raw materials rise by 50 percent just this year. Even though he has seen greater demand, he is not making more money because of the rising prices.

If he tries to pass those costs on to his customers, he will lose business. On top of that, rising gas prices are making it difficult to afford taking his kids to basketball and karate practices.

I have also talked to an operator of a food bank in Osceola, FL. She used to see 15 families each day, and now she is seeing upward of 70 families each day.

Food prices have gone through the roof, making it more expensive for her to get food to give to people who are hurting at the very time demand is up. I talked to a mom in Punta Gorda, FL. Her gas costs have more than doubled, and her monthly grocery budget doesn't go as far as it used to.

Recently, she has started visiting her local food pantry once a month so she has enough to feed her kids. That is something she has never had to do before. These are real Floridians who are hurting. Thank goodness for organizations like food pantries and everyone else who is helping families who are struggling because the Biden administration has spent months doing nothing to solve this crisis.

In fact, they are actively hurting them as inflation rises to record highs and is threatening to rise even more as Biden pushes his reckless tax-and-spend agenda.

I cannot and I will not consent to allowing these nominees to move forward in an expedited manner. We should take a vote so every Senator can get on the record with their support or opposition to these nominees.

Therefore, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I think my colleague knows darn well the President of the United States has been doing something about this. That

is why he used his leadership to make sure that we made major infrastructure investment so we could move products. That is why he has gotten the ports to work 24 hours to move product more expeditiously.

That is why he has been focused on all of the infrastructure needs in moving our country forward and continuing to deal with chokepoints, whether they are on the highways, our ports, or our rail system.

My colleague knows, too, that the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce—whom I am sure he has talked to—are working very diligently on this. I am sure they are willing to talk to him.

There is no secret here. There is the administration and a bipartisan group of people who are working together to try to solve these issues, but there are those on the other side of the aisle, probably those who didn't support the infrastructure investment, who also don't support having people spend the money and make the investments.

I am going to yield to my colleagues who are also here to try to move some of these important nominees to make this investment work in the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Shortly, I will request unanimous consent to confirm the nomination of Mr. Chris Coes to be Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Department of Transportation.

As we have discussed, we face supply chain challenges created by several compounding factors, increased demand for goods, a growing reliance on e-commerce, as well as production and labor market disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, we have underinvested in our freight infrastructure for decades. The bipartisan infrastructure law reverses that trend. It provides a historic \$567 billion for the Department of Transportation. This includes \$37 billion for freight infrastructure investments.

The Department of Transportation will be responsible for implementing and managing these funds, including INFRA and the Port Infrastructure Development Program. The Department needs leaders like Mr. Coes to coordinate implementation of these programs and get the funding Congress has approved out to the States and local governments.

Mr. Coes is very qualified to serve as Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy for the Department of Transportation, having served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy.

He received strong and bipartisan support in the Commerce Committee. In fact, there are several nominees, including Mr. Coes, who have been passed out of the Commerce Committee with bipartisan support for key posts at the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the Surface

Transportation Board, and the Federal Maritime Commission who all play integral roles in addressing the ongoing supply chain issues.

And yet some of our Republican colleagues are refusing to provide these Agencies with the leadership resources necessary to help address the supply chain crisis.

The issues facing our supply chain are complex and have been years in the making. They will not be fixed overnight, and that is why it is important to have confirmed, sustained leadership at the Agencies responsible for helping to address these multifaceted issues over the next several years.

So I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 549, Christopher A. Coes to be Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I still can't understand, if the Biden administration is doing so many things, why wouldn't they want to come brag about it? Why wouldn't they want to tell all Americans exactly what they are doing?

The reason they don't want to do it is it is not getting better. I am still hearing day in and day out from people all over my State who are hurting because the Biden administration is not doing anything to solve the supply chain crisis.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of Meera Joshi to be the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Now, there may be some folks out there who are not familiar with this Agency, but I can tell you Montanans are. I can tell you commercial truckers are because this is an Agency that is critical to tackling our supply chain issues and lowering costs for American families. Let me repeat that again because this issue has been brought up before.

This Agency, of which Ms. Joshi is to be the head of, is critical to attacking our supply chain issues and lowering the costs for American families.

In my real life, I am a farmer. I use a Peterbilt truck to get my product to market, my food to market, so I know more about this than the average person who serves in the Senate.

And I know what a huge role that trucking plays in our supply chain and our economy. And I am going to tell you, the American trucker is one of the hardest working people in this country. I know that because I tried to do it for a while. It is hard work.

They have been on the frontlines of this pandemic delivering goods to every corner of this country. And a strong and a stable, safe trucking workforce that offers good-paying jobs

to millions of truckdrivers is a critical lifeblood of our economy.

Our quality of life in this country is simply not possible without the hard work that truckdrivers put in day and night. They deserve more credit than they get.

And there are a lot of challenges out there: our outdated infrastructure, the COVID-19 pandemic, a historic—a historic—volume of goods moving through our economy that have strained capacity across our supply chain, including trucking.

The Agency is critical in ensuring that goods moving by truck do it safely and efficiently.

Now, as the chairman of the Commerce Committee has already pointed out, the President last month signed the bipartisan infrastructure package into law. It included \$568 billion in transportation funding that will improve freight bottlenecks, ease chokepoints across ports, rails, and highways.

The middle-class markets in China and India are expected to be worth a combined \$26 trillion by 2030. Now, if we want to grow this U.S. economy, maintain our position as an economic world leader, we must be able to grow our reach to those huge market opportunities.

The bipartisan infrastructure package also included parts of my HAULS Act. The HAULS Act will cut burdensome hour-of-service requirements so that Montana's egg and livestock haulers can do their jobs and do their jobs safely, but we need a head of the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration to be able to say that earnestly.

If we are going to effectively implement these new guidelines that will boost our economy in rural America and across this country, we need to confirm Ms. Joshi as soon as possible, which is why I am here tonight.

Ms. Joshi is a qualified nominee to lead this Agency. She passed through the Senate Commerce Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support. She is backed by the trucking industry.

It is unfortunate that a few of my colleagues—a minority of the minority—are blocking this confirmation at a time when we need transportation and commerce Agencies fully staffed and empowered to carry out their work, reducing costs for families, smoothing the supply chain, and growing our economy.

The Senate has had an opportunity to address supply chain issues and lower costs by confirming this nominee. I am going to say it again. The Senate has an opportunity tonight to address supply chain issues and lower costs by confirming this nominee.

There is absolutely no reason to keep this critical position vacant, and I urge my colleagues to support her confirmation tonight.

Mr. President, I would also ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 464, Meera Joshi, to be Administrator

of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, you know, my father was an over-the-road truckdriver. He drove for Admiral Freight Line. My uncle was an over-the-road truckdriver. He drove for a consolidated freight line.

I watched the difficulties my father and my uncle had performing their jobs, and it was at a time when truckers weren't paid well, and, actually, most truckers were laid off by Thanksgiving because most of the goods were there for the Christmas season.

In my father's case, I don't remember a Christmas that my dad was actively working. So I think it is very, very important that we do everything we can to help truckers, and I am glad that truckers today are paid better than they were back when my father and my uncle drove.

My uncle actually died in a trucking accident. So I think it is very important that we do everything we can to support our truckers. And what I still can't understand is why the Commerce Committee does not want to hear exactly what the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Commerce is doing to help our truckers. What are they doing to improve the supply chain?

You would think they would want to come down here to say exactly what they have done to make the life of truckers better so that we get more people in trucking rather than less.

So I think we should—I cannot allow these nominees to go forward in an expedited manner. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. So if you truly want to help the trucking industry, and it sounds like you have personal experience with it—the good Senator from Florida—putting the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a great start. If you want to reduce the problems with our supply chain, putting a head into the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a great start. If you want to make our roads safer for everybody—truckers, cars, everybody—I would say putting in the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would be a good start.

I am going to tell you that the objections of the good Senator from Florida ring hollow. I have heard the good Senator from Florida stand up in committee and stand up on this floor and talk about how the administration—this administration—has failed. Yet that very same person who claims that this administration has failed is standing up here and perpetuating the problems that we have because we can't get Agencies staffed up. This is ridiculous.

So you ask yourself: Why can't the Department of Transportation and De-

partment of Commerce come before the committee?

Look, we are all U.S. Senators here. Pick up the phone. Give him a call.

With this kind of attitude—you talked about the fact that food was going up. Why aren't we demanding the Secretary of Agriculture show up?

You said there are small business problems. Why aren't we demanding the Small Business Administration show up?

This could go on forever.

If you really want to fix a problem, let's look for solutions. And the solutions we have here tonight—this one—is to confirm Ms. Meera Joshi to the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration.

We can make excuses all the time about why we are going to do this, why we are going to do that. Pick up the phone. Give them a call. Ask them to meet with you.

That is all it would take. You don't need to shut down the whole administration, shut down the Motor Carriers by not putting the head in.

This is ridiculous.

Mr. President, I now want to speak of my support for the nomination of Amitabha Bose to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Consisting of almost 140,000 miles of railroad track, the U.S. freight rail network is the largest in the world and carries 1.4 billion tons of freight every year worth \$430 billion to our economy.

Some estimate that the global demand for freight will triple by 2050, which is why we need to improve the capacity for our system to meet the supply chain needs of today and prepare for the future.

Last month, as the chair of the Commerce Committee has already pointed out, the President signed my bipartisan infrastructure package into law that included \$567 billion in transportation funding that will improve freight bottlenecks, ease chokepoints across our ports, railways, and highways. It will lower costs for families. It will grow our economy.

Gosh, does this sound familiar? It is awful lot like the last nominee.

And this legislation also includes the Right Track Act, which I support and which I sponsored. My bill addresses blocked rail crossings—by the way, a bipartisan bill—which improves rail safety at rural train crossings and addresses instances of blocked highway railroad crossings across the United States that put our families in danger and slow down our economy.

I point that out because all too often we have accidents involving a train and a car. Get this person confirmed, and we can hold people accountable.

The infrastructure package also included \$15 million to study Amtrak's long-distance passenger rail travel service, including authorization to form working groups, like the Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Working Group, to study and advocate for increased access to long-distance passenger rail travel.

These freight rail programs are administered by the FRA, and grants must get out the door as quickly as possible if we are going to get the bang for the dollar, if the taxpayer is going to get the bang for the dollar.

Holding up Amit Bose's nomination risks delaying these critical resources from reaching local communities.

Now, that might make some people in here happy. There was a bunch of folks—it passed by 69 votes, but there were 30-some folks that voted against it. So maybe they don't want this. Maybe they don't want infrastructure. Maybe they want to turn the keys of the economy over to China. Maybe that is what they want.

But the fact is that these critical resources will end up enriching our communities, improving our freight rail service, and growing our economy.

Additionally, the FRA is working closely with railroads to provide regulatory expertise and assistance to ensure that significant operational changes—including setting up new rail yards that can help move goods across our country, solving the supply chain problem—is done both quickly and safely.

Mr. Bose is a very qualified nominee to lead the FRA, having previously worked in multiple roles at FRA, including Deputy Administrator, Chief Counsel, Senior Adviser, and Director of Governmental Affairs.

He, too, received a strong bipartisan support in committee and, in fact, advanced by a voice vote.

Once again, it is unfortunate—and maybe it won't happen on this one—that some of my colleagues are blocking nominees from confirmation at a time when we can't afford to leave our Agencies understaffed, and they are blocking it because of supply chain issues and because of the high costs for small business. And with the blockage of these nominees, what is ending up happening is that the supply chain issues will get worse, which, maybe, that is what they want.

But that is not why I am here. I am here to get things done, to move this country forward. I know what China is doing right now, and it is why we had 69 people vote for the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

But if we leave the Agencies understaffed, then maybe that is going to help somebody. I don't know who it is going to help. But there is no reason to keep this critical position vacant, and I would urge my colleagues to support his confirmation.

Therefore, I would ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 465, Amitabha Bose to be Director of the Federal Railroad Administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, you know, my colleagues keep talking about the infrastructure bill. The dif-

ference between their infrastructure bill and what we did while I was Governor of Florida is this: I actually spent our infrastructure money on roads, bridges, airports, and seaports, and, at the same time, we spent \$85 billion in 8 years in one State doing that. We also cut taxes and fees 100 times, and we actually reduced our debt by a third, over \$10 billion.

The infrastructure bill—the so-called infrastructure bill—had less than 50 percent of it in infrastructure. People said it was paid for, and it wasn't.

So I am glad people want to keep saying that it is a so-called infrastructure bill, but let's remember: It wasn't paid for; they said it was. And it wasn't all for roads, bridges, airports, and seaports, which is what they said it was in the beginning.

So, therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, facts are a nasty thing. Do you know that?

I would ask the good Senator from Florida to read the damn bill. This bill is to put money into roads and bridges, to put money into our electrical grid, to put money into our ports, to make our ports safer, to put money into water systems—the list goes on and on and on.

For you to say that 50 percent of this bill is all that goes into infrastructure is not factual at all, and I will debate you on that until midnight tonight and longer—until Christmas Eve, because it is not factual.

But I will tell you what is factual: The fact is that you, the good Senator from Florida, have stopped Amit Bose from being Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, thereby stopping any sort of improvements in the supply chain that we have, thereby stopping any sort of lowering of costs for small businesses and working families in this country. That is a fact.

And if you would like to respond to that, I would be more than happy to yield.

That is a fact. The truth is the same people who stand up here and say this administration has got problems are creating those problems, because a minority of the minority are stopping good people from being in positions in this administration. That is a fact.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, first of all, facts are facts. Less than 50 percent of the bill had anything to do with roads and bridges, airports and seaports.

We were told all along it was going to be paid for; it wasn't. The Congressional Budget Office confirmed that.

So facts are facts.

On top of that, the majority leader could have, if these were important nominees, as my colleagues keep saying they are, they could have filed cloture and done these nominees.

I mean, think of what we have done this last 2 weeks that we have been up

here. Very few nominees have come through.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Very crafty—fifty percent is used on roads, bridges, and seaports, and you make it sound like the rest isn't used on infrastructure.

Since when did water not become infrastructure? Since when did improving our transmission lines not become infrastructure?

The fact of the matter is this bill is a really good bill, and that is why 69 people in this Senate voted for it, and it did not raise taxes on a single American family.

You can make excuses all you want, but the facts are this: That infrastructure bill will help set us up for a vibrant economy for generations to come, and the most important thing that infrastructure bill will do is it will help us compete with China, unless you want to give the reserve currency to them.

And the fact of the matter is, unless the Agencies are staffed up, we can't implement that infrastructure bill. And if that is the impetus for this, shame on the folks who have objected to this, because the last time I checked, we are U.S. Senators, and we are not here for ourselves. We are here for this Nation, to make this Nation great, to keep this Nation great, to move this Nation forward.

Our forefathers worked to do that. They didn't have these kinds of silly arguments on the Senate floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, so I think my colleague doesn't understand that when you borrow money, you eventually have to pay it back.

The government doesn't produce income. It takes money from people. That means that when that bill—the so-called infrastructure bill—runs deficits, somebody's taxes are going up. Whether they go up today or tomorrow, they are going to go up.

And, by the way, it is part of why the Democrats had to raise the debt ceiling by \$2.5 trillion, and that is \$2.5 trillion that Americans families are going to have to pay for.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. So are you suggesting we shouldn't raise the debt and not pay our debts and default? Is that the suggestion?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I would do what I did in Florida. I walked into a \$4 billion budget deficit. I balanced the budget. I cuts taxes and fees 100 times. I paid off a third of the State debt. I never increased my State debt. I actually cut it by \$10.5 billion. That is exactly what we ought to be doing here. We can't keep wasting money because somebody is going to pay for it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Did the good Senator vote for the CARES Act?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Say again?

Mr. TESTER. Did the good Senator from Florida vote for the CARES Act?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Absolutely.

Mr. TESTER. Was it paid for?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Part of it. Last year, what we did was suspend the debt ceiling.

Mr. TESTER. Yes, it wasn't paid for. It added to the debt. Had the good Senator been here when we passed the Trump tax cuts, that also added \$2 trillion a year to the debt, and he would have justified that.

If you want to talk about building our economy, there are two things you could do to build our economy: No. 1 is to invest in infrastructure, and the other one is to invest in education and workforce training.

If we are going to get the infrastructure part of this stuff out the door, we cannot have a minority of the minority on the other side continuing to object to people in the very Agencies that will help get this infrastructure built up. That is the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, my experience is totally different than my colleague from Montana's experience.

My experience is you build your economy by growing jobs. You build your economy by investing in education, where you get a return. So, in my 8 years as Governor of Florida, we added 1.7 million jobs. We cut taxes and revenues grew. It allowed us to make record investments in education, in transportation, and in the environment. By the time I left office in Florida, we had the second lowest tuition of higher education in the country. According to the U.S. News & World Report, we were No. 1 in education, but we did it by getting a return on all of the dollars. We didn't do it by just spending money without getting a return.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I heard the Senator from Florida just say that he invested in education, workforce training, and infrastructure. If he would have not had an administration that would have been able to have gotten that money out the door, then he wouldn't have been able to have succeeded. All we are asking is that we offer the President of the United States and this Nation, as a whole, that same opportunity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, my colleague from Montana is making some great points in this debate.

I can't emphasize this enough to my colleague from Florida, a member of our committee. He knows how hard we have all worked on these. He knows

how bipartisan this effort was. He knows that he is not joined by a bunch of other colleagues here tonight, you know, in making these objections. It is because they want these nominees. They voted for them.

To come from a State like mine, where one in four jobs is related to trade, it is all about infrastructure. It is about our ports, our airports, our railroads, our roads. It is about getting the products from Montana out to the Pacific and to those destinations. It is all about making this infrastructure investment, and we finally have a President who is willing to put everything on the line to get us back to making an infrastructure investment that is more than 1 percent of GDP and who is smart enough to know that those ports and everything else are not going to function well and that we are not going to be competitive with Canada or with South America or with other places if we don't make this investment.

Well, now we have made it. We have made the investment. Now, we just need the people to execute on it, and our colleague doesn't want those individuals to be part of this process. He is not ready for them.

Everybody gets frustrated with the position of an administration. Everybody wants to hear from a nominee. I have called nominees. You would think that some of those people might call me, but, no, I have had to pick up the phone and call them and say: Here is what my concern is. Where are you going to be on this issue? What are you going to do about this problem?

Did I have everything guaranteed? Did I have every policy that I wanted to see for that nominee? No, but I picked up the phone and got the commitment that I needed to see things through and get things moving.

So, now, the fact that we have these nominees who continue to be held, as my colleague said, by a minority of the minority because they don't want to see the infrastructure investments that we have already voted on put in place is just really holding up government. It is just holding it up.

I think the President deserves to have his nominees. We deserve to get to vote on them. We deserve to give the President of the United States our opinion, but we also deserve to have these nominees voted on and not held in this process so that the government—so the actual functioning of the infrastructure bill—can't be implemented even though the majority of the Senate voted that way.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request of Executive Calendar No. 468, Mohsin Raza Syed, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

Let's remember why I am here.

For weeks, I have been asking the chair of the Commerce Committee to invite the Secretaries of Transportation and Commerce to come tell us what they are doing to fix this supply chain crisis. We still have 100 cargo ships off the coast of California. Is it getting better? No, it is not getting better. I was on a call this week, and I did not hear one thing that has been done to solve this supply chain crisis.

When I was the Governor of Florida, we had hurricanes. We had to work hard to make sure we didn't run out of fuel. To make that happen, what we would do is we would put everybody together. I often went to the ports to make sure that we got the fuel through, and we did. We got it done.

I have not seen the Secretary of Transportation go out to the Port of Palm Beach to solve any problems at all. I have not heard of anything the Secretary of Commerce has done to go out to California and solve this supply chain crisis. On these nominees, cloture could have been filed by the majority leader. For whatever reason, the majority leader decided not to do it.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, my colleague knows very well that, just yesterday, the Deputy Secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, and Agriculture met with—and it may have been on a Zoom call or on the phone—Senators to talk about exactly what is going on to help work on the supply chain. The Senator knows very well. Now, he may not have liked exactly what he heard in the outcome, but there are no harder working people than the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation in implementing the things that need to be implemented to keep our country moving.

The problem, I think, is that the Senator from Florida may not understand that there is a huge upside. We just had a hearing yesterday with all of the airlines, and we acted on the Payroll Support Program. The end result of that has been a big boon to our economy because they were there and in place to capture the upside when the vaccines worked and the flying public returned. So we, the United States of America, have outdone Europe and Asia and Canada. Basically, the upside is having our air transportation system now back up to 90 percent of capacity. We did that because we acted. We made an investment, and the investment is paying off, and it kept a workforce that otherwise would have been on unemployment benefits.

So this administration is working. This administration is working, and it needs people to help them implement the bill we just passed. The administration has been working with major ports to have night and weekend cargo operations. It has been working with companies to improve the transparency of

logistics and pricing. It has been working with shippers to get the cargo and containers in and out of the ports faster.

He is urging some of the largest shippers—Walmart, Target, Home Depot, Samsung, FedEx, and UPS—to commit to moving cargo during off-peak hours and making those commitments.

Two major railroads—Union Pacific and BNSF—have announced that they will create new incentives for cargo owners to move cargo on the weekends.

CMA CGM—one of the largest carriers—has begun providing \$100 discounts on the containers if they are picked up immediately, which is helping move them off the docks. One of the problems is that empty containers have been left on the docks, and this has caused congestion at the ports. So the administration has worked with these carriers to help incentive people who have been part of the shipping system to get that product off of the docks. We have begun to see positive results from this.

This month, the CEOs of the major retailers told President Biden that the supply chain conditions have begun to show signs of improvement. This is from the major retailers.

As to the issues that we are focusing on here, we are talking to two people who are out fixing the problem. The Senator had a chance to talk to their Deputies about this. These are people who are definitely available to be talked to about this problem. Yet they are asking us to continue to have a workforce.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 469, Victoria Marie Baecher Wassmer, of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Transportation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

First, I want to thank my colleague from Washington for holding the hearing with the airlines, and there are two things about that.

I was surprised that I didn't get a very good answer from the airlines about, did we get a return on the—what?—\$54 billion we provided the airline industry? I was extremely disappointed that United Airlines was cavalier with the employees in my State who were basically let go or laid off without pay only because they decided not to get the vaccine for religious purposes.

In coming back to this issue, I still am waiting for the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce to come to a public event so all of our constituents in my State can hear exactly what they are doing to solve the supply chain problem. I can tell you that I was on this phone call, and this problem is not getting better. There are still 100 cargo ships off the

coast of California. I want to hear exactly what they are doing and so do the citizens of my State.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, these nominees we are talking about are nominees who are literally just the people who are going to help get these things done within the Agencies. The Senator is basically denying people the ability to have analysis, to talk about competition, to talk about the effective strategies that we need to put in place.

The Commerce Committee has had three hearings on the supply chain. In fact, we had some fabulous testimony, starting in—I think it was—February or March, about the supply chain. It was a fabulous panel of experts, and it was about the complexity of what was happening to the supply chain and what our problems were going to be.

The one thing that is clear is that this isn't an issue for just COVID; that this isn't an issue for just this administration; and that this isn't an issue even for the next, you know, few years. This is an issue about the fact that, in the world economy in 2019, prior to the pandemic, something miraculous happened: The majority of the population of the world reached middle class. That meant the majority of people outside the United States was going to be a huge market opportunity for our goods and our products. It is a huge economic opportunity that 95 percent of consumers are outside the United States. That means we have to get things to those markets cost-effectively and competitively.

For us in Seattle, the Port of Seattle has to compete with the Port of Vancouver. The Port of Vancouver and the infrastructure of—Canada has made all sorts of infrastructure investment all across Canada with rail and port investment so that they can have the state of the art and so that it can be cheaper to ship through Canada than the United States. The same thing is happening in South America and other parts of the world. This is about who is going to reach the Asian market and how fast they are going to reach the Asian market.

The infrastructure investment was critical. It was critical to making sure that our railroads worked, that our ports worked, that our motor carriers had the right people and had the right safety. This was, literally, upgrading our infrastructure that had been ignored—basically kept on life support—for so long, and now, we have a President and a bipartisan group of people who are going to make the investment. So the fact that those Agencies now need people—even the next nominee we are talking about—it is just literally about making investments so that they can figure out the strategy and the strategy moving forward on these individuals.

I don't understand why so many of these nominees my colleague has to object to because these nominees are individuals who are part of our infrastructure investment and, in this case, are part of where we are with the Department of Commerce in understanding what is even happening in the supply chain and what we also want to do.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 355, Grant T. Harris, of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President reserving the right to object.

I want to be clear. I like infrastructure. I spent \$85 billion on infrastructure. With \$10 billion a year, we had a dramatic increase in infrastructure. It is part of the reason we added 1.7 million jobs. I also did a lot of work to try to make sure we increased trade in Florida. We have 15 seaports. I believe in all of this.

I also believe we have a supply chain crisis right now. It is not getting better. I am shocked that my colleague does not want to ask the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Commerce to explain to the American public why this is not getting better.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. We are here on whatever today is—December 16. We are here, you know, as Congress careers toward trying to get some work done before we break for the holiday season.

I am sure that my colleague knows very well where the administration is on getting its nominees. We are not even the only committee that is out here on a weekly basis complaining about the number of nominees who are not allowed to serve. Even though they come out of committee with bipartisan support, they are not being allowed to be taken up and acted upon.

We have had people out here from the Foreign Affairs Committee. We have had nominees. We have had various committees—the HELP Committee. So we are just here now talking about the Transportation Committee.

So, yes, we have a minority within the minority that doesn't want the administration to have the nominees it needs to get things done. In this case, it is infrastructure. The importance of that is that the majority of people voted for infrastructure. The majority of people have voted for these nominees, and these nominees deserve to get in their place so that individuals can do their work.

If the Senator from Florida doesn't want to support—didn't want to support the infrastructure bill, doesn't believe that it was done just like he

would do it, I would ask him to consider the fact that his colleagues, the majority of whom did support it, are now going to be delayed in getting those resources out the door.

Now, maybe that is what he wants. Maybe he is playing a game of the calendar. He is just hoping that those nominees won't ever get into these spots, that it will take forever for us to get these programs implemented. Our economy can't wait for that. Our economy and the investments that we all decided to make can't wait for this kind of gamesmanship. The small businesses that my colleague from Montana talked about can't wait for that gamesmanship.

I guarantee you those Secretaries will be in front of the Commerce Committee in the new year at some point in time. I guarantee it. That is what happens around here. I am pretty sure they will be asked these questions. I am sure they are asked these questions every single day. I am pretty sure they would take a call from my colleague tonight or tomorrow. I am pretty sure they would have the input from him that he would want to give in these situations.

But this is an issue about whether you are for the infrastructure investment and whether you are for making that a reality by having the people whom it takes to implement it. And if you don't have CFOs, if you don't have the Administrators of the Agencies, if you don't have the people who are targeted to do the investment, I am not sure how you can do it.

One of those nominees, Arun Venkataraman, currently serves as a counselor to the Secretary of Commerce on trade and international matters. He has more than 20 years of experience in working on these issues and is somebody who could benefit us in this analysis of the challenges that we are facing to get our products into these markets and get them into these markets quickly.

So I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 586, Arun Venkataraman to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, the one thing that has not been addressed is, if this were so important, why didn't my colleagues go to the majority leader—same party—and ask him to file cloture on these nominees?

I still also have never been told why, when I have been asking for this for weeks, these two Secretaries won't show up and tell my citizens why they can't solve the supply chain problem. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I think we have had a good discussion of exactly what these individuals—the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation—have been doing. They have been making their deputies available for conversations about supply chains. We have had supply chain hearings. We will continue to address this issue. I am pretty sure they will take his phone call.

I am pretty sure that the reason we are out here is because when the other side of the aisle holds up so many nominees, there are only so many cloture motions that you can file. But I guess we will be here this weekend, and we will find out exactly how many cloture motions and how long it will take to continue to get these nominees.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

ELECTIONS

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a grave threat that we face, a threat to the very idea of America.

By law, every 2 years, Americans cast their votes for Federal office on a Tuesday in early November. Like many Americans, I have always treasured that day. I have gone to my polling place, and I have cast my vote. When I have left, usually from a townhall or a school, I have done so with the confidence that the votes would be counted, a winner declared, and my town, my State, and my country would move forward, accepting the results not because of which candidates won but because of our confidence that the election system was run impartially by people who believe in our democracy and believe that democracy is about free, fair, and impartially administered elections.

This great democracy of ours depends on the existence of a free and fair casting and telling of the votes and the public's acceptance of that result. That is the prerequisite for a functioning democracy, and every other piece of our society, from our economy to our national security, depends on it.

Without free, fair, and impartially administered elections, the United States of America as we know it would not exist. Yet, right now, our beloved democracy is under attack.

In States around the country, partisan lawmakers are proposing to ignore properly cast votes, essentially trying to throw out the votes and silence the voices of those with whom they disagree. These partisans are more concerned about losing power than protecting the rights of citizens and preserving the foundation of our country.

Here in Washington, a set of arcane Senate rules are being used as an excuse not to act. This cannot stand. We must change the rules to allow a simple majority of this body, as our

Founders intended, to pass laws that will protect the right to vote and protect American democracy.

In States across the country, partisan politicians are calling into question the sacred American right to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. These politicians are trying to reject the will of the people, trying to interfere with elections and, yes, overturn results. This is not an idle threat; it is happening right now.

As the Presiding Officer well knows, earlier this year in Georgia, a new law enabled the legislature to seize control of the State election board, allowing elected legislators to install a partisan majority beholden to that legislature, with the ability to suspend and replace local election officials.

In Arizona, legislators have proposed a bill that would enable the State legislature to override an election certification with a simple majority vote.

These efforts threaten the integrity of our election system. That, in turn, threatens our peace, stability, and certainty—the very rule of law that makes individual liberty, a vibrant economy, and, yes, the peaceful transfer of power possible.

There is no single aspect of American life that isn't related to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. We have public schools, safe neighborhoods, access to healthcare, support for small businesses, and access to the great outdoors all because ordinary Americans can make their voices heard and hold their government—a government of, by, and for the people—accountable.

In America, as imperfect as we are, everybody has the opportunity to succeed because everyone has the opportunity to vote. But that all changes when our election system is corrupted by politicians who are more interested in clinging to power than being responsive to the people whom they were elected to represent.

When those in power work to create a partisan electoral system where the focus is not on ensuring that every vote is counted but is instead on ensuring a predetermined outcome, those in power become less and less responsive to the will of the people. And as citizens become disenfranchised and angry, those in power increasingly rely on authoritarian methods to stay in power. That is the road that we risk going down if this systematic undermining of our elections and our democracy continues.

Authoritarian regimes like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea would like nothing more than to see our great American experiment fail, to see Members of this Congress stand by while our democracy withers on the vine. When Americans lose trust in our democracy, when the integrity of our elections is thrown into doubt, neither Republicans nor Democrats win; our enemies do.

But we in the Senate can stop this threat to our democracy by acting to