The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1250) was agreed to.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. FAITHCLOTH. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about the surface transportation reauthorization debate. North Carolina is the number one donor State. We received just 82 cents on the dollar for our gas tax contributions to the Highway Trust Fund under the 1991 ISTEA. In fact, over the 40 year life of the federal highway aid program, we have received just 87 cents for every dollar that we sent to Washington. There is no State that received a lesser rate of return on its gas taxes than North Carolina.

Mr. President, like other Donor State Senators, I will not support a reauthorization bill that fails to offer the Donor States some basic fairness. The Donor States accepted this role—and accepted it graciously—for forty years. The Chafee-Warner-Baucus bill is a step in the right direction. However, there is much work to be done. I served on the North Carolina Highway Commission and chaired it for four years. We understood the national importance of the interstate system. We were not happy about our Donor State status, Mr. President, but we accepted it. We understood that the interstate system was a national priority. However, the interstate system is now almost complete, and the rationale for Donor and Donee States is gone.

The Donor States are not asking for extra dollars. We're not asking to be made whole for past subsidies to the Donee States. We just want an equitable rate of return on our gas taxes. Just a fair return after forty years of our subsidies to other States. I believe that there is a real role for the federal government in transportation. But it must be a fair one. Make no mistake about it, now that the rationale for Donor and Donee States is gone, their argument is just plain old-fashioned politics.

Let me illustrate the absurd results of this long-term imbalance. One of the last additions to the 1991 ISTEA was a 3 billion dollar pot of money to reimburse States for the costs of roads built before the start of the Interstate system in 1956. This so-called ''equity category'' benefitted, for the most part, northeastern Donee States. These are the same States that enjoyed a huge windfall from the federal highway aid program during the Interstate construction era. Mr. President, these roads are more than 40 years old, and the construction bonds were paid off long ago. The toll booths are still up, though, collecting millions of dollars. These States received 3 billion dollars in ISTEA—for 40-year-old roads—but, apparently, that wasn't enough for them.

The Clinton Administration proposed in its NEXTEA that the American taxpayers continue to funnel their hard-earned tax dollars to these States. In the NEXTEA proposal—its plan for the first post-Interstate highway bill—the White House proposes not only to retain this program, but to increase it to 6 billion dollars.

These must have been pretty expensive roads. After all, Mr. President, they have been paid for several times. First, the drivers paid tolls to pay off the construction bonds, and these roads were all paid off more than a decade ago. After the bonds were paid off, though, the States kept collecting tolls. Then the federal government sent 3 billion dollars to pay for the roads again. And the States kept collecting the tolls.

Now they want 6 billion dollars to pay for the roads another time. And they will still keep collecting the tolls. North Carolina drivers lose 20 cents off every gas tax dollar to the Donee States. The Southern States are growing fast and have major transportation needs. But, not only can't North Carolina drivers get a dollar for dollar return, we are supposed to pay again and again for these 40-year-old roads. It seems just absurd to squander money like this. It is especially absurd since there is such a limited pool of transportation funds.

In fact, Mr. President, the transportation budget is so squeezed that we hear all this talk about new ''user fees'' for transportation. These are just new taxes, of course, just a euphemism for new ways to take money from the taxpayers. The American people are already overtaxed. These proposals to raise taxes just defy common sense. I find it interesting, however, that I don't hear much discussion about one of the most obvious ways to increase the value of our transportation dollars. It will not cost the taxpayers a dime and will boost the value of some transportation dollars by 15 percent.

The taxpayers' friends know that I am talking about repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act. I am talking about a Congress that favors the taxpayers over the union bosses. These Davis-Bacon requirements, especially the ''union work practices'' provision, drive up construction costs because they promote inefficiency in many forms. Davis-Bacon is a needless surcharge, just a contribution to union bosses, on these construction projects. The Davis-Bacon Act drives up construction costs by an average of 15 percent. The Congressional Budget Office confirms that repeal of Davis-Bacon will save the taxpayers billions of dollars.

Incredibly, the White House proposed to expand Davis-Bacon in its transportation bill. It is no secret, though, that Davis-Bacon repeal is essential if we are serious about squeezing every penny out of the federal highway program. It is far better for the taxpayers to root out these inefficiencies than to raise the taxes of the American people. I know that some people find it hard to imagine that there are alternatives to new taxes in order to increase the transportation budget. This Senate voted this year for billions of dollars for a mission in Bosnia, which was supposed to be over last year, and for hundreds of millions of dollars in new welfare spending.

It is time to cut the waste—not raise taxes—to fund our transportation priorities. This is the first authorization bill in the post-Interstate era. It is also the first authorization bill subject to the constraints of a balanced budget plan. This bill brings new challenges. And, Mr. President, new obligations. This bill must be fair to the States that subsidized the Interstate system for 40 years. We need to get the most for each and every dollar in the transportation budget. We certainly cannot afford to squander taxpayer dollars on outdated rules in order to prop up the power of the labor unions.

It's time to tell the union bosses that the good times are over! This is not their transportation bill! North Carolina needs a transportation bill that builds highways, not government bureaucracies. A transportation bill that works for the taxpayers, not the labor bosses. Mr. President, if this bill is not fair to North Carolina taxpayers, I will be forced to filibuster it.

VISIT OF DAVID TRIMBLE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, next week David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, will begin a visit to the United States where he will meet with many of us on both sides of the aisle in Congress who are deeply committed to helping achieve a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. There is perhaps no one better placed to make that happen than Mr. Trimble, who leads Northern Ireland's largest party.

Mr. Trimble is to be commended for bringing his party into the current talks, which now include Sinn Fein as a result of the restoration of the IRA cease-fire in July. Those talks are ably