

our Nation's covered bridges. Moneys provided by the measure give the States the ability to fully restore their covered bridges ensuring the safety of travelers without compromising the bridges' historical integrity.

This amendment calls for proper research, construction and maintenance techniques. The proposal will provide funds for fire, arson and vandalism prevention. These grants to States will prove vital to ensuring the covered bridges survive into the next century, into the next millennium.

These covered bridges stand as a reminder of our heritage and contribute immensely to making our Nation the beautiful place it is today. I urge my colleagues to adopt this amendment.

I commend the authors of this legislation, Senators CHAFEE, WARNER, and BAUCUS, for completing action on this measure.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I am pleased to join with my friend and colleague Senator JEFFORDS, to help spotlight and preserve an important part of America's and Iowa's heritage—covered bridges. This amendment will help our states to do the rehabilitation and preservation work necessary to maintain these icons of the open road. I urge the adoption of this amendment.

There is a romance concerning our Nation's covered bridges. They bring forth pictures of a different time in American history. It was a time when life moved more slowly, both on and off the road. It was time when travelers could take the time to enjoy the scenery as they unhurriedly passed by. Now it seems that most of us are in a hurry to get to our next destination, with little or no time to observe and enjoy the passing scene.

Today, I am happy to say, these bridges are drawing tourists. In Iowa this is in no small part due to a very popular book which was made into a movie. "The Bridges of Madison County" has greatly helped to focus attention on covered bridges. For Iowa, the book and movie have helped to increase our tourism industry. For our Nation, the book and movie have helped to bring into full view of the public a unique part of our transportation and cultural heritage. This attention for the covered bridges is well deserved.

Maintenance and protection of these bridges is expensive. It is well that we take steps at the federal level to help the states preserve and protect these structures of beauty and grace. They are truly a national enhancement, a vital part of our history, and deserving of our special attention.

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, I have sought recognition to speak in support of the Jeffords-Specter amendment, which establishes a federal grant program to preserve our Nation's historic wood-covered bridges for future generations.

There are 526 covered bridges nationwide, and almost 90 percent are in a critical state of disrepair. Pennsyl-

vania enjoys the most covered bridges of any state, with 167. Unfortunately, the vast majority are either closed, or have weight limitations placed upon them to forestall further deterioration. Aside from the aesthetic reasons for repairing these bridges, there are safety implications as well for those who travel across them each day.

The wood-covered bridges which dot the landscape across rural America serve as more than simply a tourist attraction. They are in essence a bridge to our past which allows us to better understand how previous generations worked to expand this Nation's transportation infrastructure and link communities together. It would indeed be a tragedy to allow them to simply waste away.

It is estimated that approximately \$344 million will be needed to bring all of our Nation's covered bridges up to standard. Our amendment would authorize \$25 million each year over a period of seven years to restore and maintain these bridges, which are over 50 years of age. This would provide states with a much-needed dedicated source of funding to be used strictly for covered bridge preservation.

As a member of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, I will work with my colleagues to ensure a steady funding stream once this program is authorized by passage of this amendment.

If we do not act now, these national treasures will be lost forever. I urge my colleagues to adopt this amendment and thank Senator JEFFORDS for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. CHAFEE addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. CHAFEE. Madam President, I commend the Senator from Vermont for his amendment. I think he is dealing with a very, very important subject. Having traveled a good deal in Vermont, I am familiar with these lovely covered bridges, but his amendment does not restrict the protection for the covered bridges to only his State. I think some 16 different States are involved with this amendment, and others beyond that, perhaps.

As the pictures show, these are magnificent structures and really very unique engineering feats. We want to do everything we can to preserve them, and this is a modest step in that direction. I think it is a very worthwhile amendment to take.

Mr. FORD. Madam President, Senator BAUCUS, who is the floor manager from our side, was called away from the floor, and I am attempting to assist his staff and to help our distinguished chairman. I am advised this side has no objection to the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1716), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. FORD. Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. CHAFEE. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. JEFFORDS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the statements of Senators BINGAMAN, HUTCHINSON, MURRAY, COLLINS, REED and WARNER be considered as a part of the proceedings in this morning's executive session of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

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

Mr. JEFFORDS. I yield the floor. Mr. FORD. 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. CHAFEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CHAFEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there now 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.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. ROTH. Madam President, we live in an era of great events—a moment when opportunity seized in a thoughtful and timely manner will allow us to make history. Today I want to show how conditions that have been created by our efforts to strengthen the economy and bring down the deficit can not only save Social Security in the short term, but begin today to strengthen it for our children and for generations yet to come.

Saving Social Security is a promise we have made to Americans—both young and old. It's a promise that President Clinton reiterated in his most recent State of the Union Address. And it's a promise that we can keep, despite the challenging demographics and declining trend lines that currently point to a bleak future for a program that many would say is the most important contract our government has ever entered into with the American people.

Social Security has saved countless men, women and children from poverty. It protects our elderly, our disabled, their families, and dependents of workers who have died. In its 63-year history—and despite pressing challenges—Social Security has been a success. More than 40 percent of our seniors are kept out of poverty because of