Finally, the Senate ISTEA bill extends the current excise tax exemption for an important Illinois product—corn-based, renewable ethanol fuel—to 2007. Farmers and the ethanol industry must be able to plan for the future. Extending the incentive will allow them to do so.

Mr. President, the Senate's action on ISTEA sets the stage for Congress to uphold its obligation to reauthorize these vitally important transportation programs before they expire again later this spring. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that our nation's transportation needs are properly met.●

REMEMBERING SENATOR ABRAHAM RIBICOFF

● Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to talk about a man who served the people of Connecticut and America with dignity, honor and great style. Abraham Ribicoff spent most of his life in the public service. Before he became a Senator in 1962, he was a Congressman, the Governor of Connecticut, and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Kennedy administration. He was a true leader in the Senate on many issues and his style of leadership and public service will be greatly missed.

During his time in the Senate, Senator Ribicoff served on the Government Operations Committee, which was renamed the Governmental Affairs Committee during his tenure. He began his service on the committee on February 25, 1963 and served as Chairman from 1977 to 1980.

As Chairman, Senator Ribicoff oversaw the passage of many initiatives we now take for granted in the government. One such bill was the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which was the first substantive reform of the Federal civil service in nearly 100 years. He also helped to enact the Ethics in Government Act, which mandates public disclosure for high-ranking officials in the three branches of the Federal Government. He navigated to passage legislation that created Inspectors General in each of the major federal agencies to serve as public watchdogs to combat waste, fraud and abuse in federal programs.

During his tenure as Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ribicoff also oversaw the implementation of legislation that established a permanent, Cabinet-level Department of Energy in the executive branch. By doing so, all of the federal government's major energy programs were brought together in one place, including those programs relating to economic regulation of energy supply systems. He also worked closely with Senator GLENN to help enact the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, which established a more effective framework for international cooperation to meet the energy needs of nations. It also ensured that the worldwide development of peaceful nuclear activities and the export by any nation of nuclear materials, equipment, and nuclear technology intended for the use in peaceful nuclear activities did not contribute to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

An area in which Senator Ribicoff and I shared a great interest is that of federal regulation and how to make it more effective, and at the same time, less burdensome. On July 26, 1975, Senate Resolution 71, introduced by Senator Ribicoff and Senator GLENN, was agreed to by the Committee. This resolution authorized a study of Federal regulatory agencies to be undertaken jointly by the Committee on Commerce and the Committee on Government Operations. The first two of these studies which the Committee on Government Operations compiled were entitled ''Study on Federal Regulation: The Regulatory Appointment Process,'' and ''Study on Federal Regulation: Congressional Oversight of Executive Agencies.'' These two studies set the groundwork for the regulatory reform work that the committee undertook at that time and which we continue to pursue today.

I want to acknowledge Senator Ribicoff for having the foresight, some twenty years ago, to examine the regulatory process. As I have found out this is not an easy task, but well worth the effort. While Senator Ribicoff's leadership and public service will be greatly missed, it is my hope that we can carry on his pioneering work and establish a better and smarter regulatory process.●

DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS AND OBLIGATIONS ACT OF 1998

● Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask that the text of S. 1636, a bill to provide benefits to domestic partners of Federal employees, be printed in the RECORD.

The text of the bill follows:

S. 1636

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 1998''.

SEC. 2. BENEFITS TO DOMESTIC PARTNERS OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—A domestic partner of an employee shall be entitled to benefits available to and obligations imposed upon a spouse of an employee.

(b) CERTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY.—In order to obtain benefits under this Act, an employee shall file an affidavit of eligibility for benefits with the Office of Personnel Management certifying that the employee and the domestic partner of the employee—

(1) are each other's sole domestic partner and intend to remain so indefinitely;

(2) have a common residence, and intend to continue the arrangement;

(3) are at least 18 years of age and mentally competent to consent to contract;

(4) share responsibility for a significant measure of each other's common welfare and financial obligations;

(5) are not married to or domestic partners with anyone else;

(6) understand that willful falsification of information within the affidavit may lead to disciplinary action, including termination of employment, and the recovery of the cost of benefits received related to such falsification; and

(7) are same sex domestic partners, and not related in a way that, if the 2 were of opposite sex, would prohibit legal marriage in the State in which they reside.

(c) DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—An employee or domestic partner of an employee who obtains benefits under this Act shall file a statement of dissolution of the domestic partnership with the Office of Personnel Management not later than 30 days after the death of the employee or the domestic partner or the date of dissolution of the domestic partnership.

(2) DEATH OF EMPLOYEE.—In a case in which an employee dies, the domestic partner of the employee at the time of death shall be deemed a spouse of the employee for the purpose of receiving benefits under this Act.

(3) OTHER DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In a case in which a domestic partnership dissolves by a method other than death of the employee or domestic partner of the employee, any benefits received by the domestic partner as a result of this Act shall terminate.

(B) EXCEPTION.—In a case in which a domestic partnership dissolves by a method other than death of the employee or domestic partner of the employee, any health benefits received by the domestic partner as a result of this Act shall continue for a period of 60 days after the date of the dissolution of the partnership. The domestic partner shall pay for such benefits in the same manner that a former spouse would pay for such benefits under section 8905a of title 5, United States Code.

(d) SUBSEQUENT PARTNERSHIPS.—If an employee files a statement of dissolution of partnership under subsection (c)(1), the employee may file a certification of eligibility under subsection (b) relating to another partner—

(1) not earlier than 180 days after the date of filing such statement of dissolution, if such dissolution did not result from the death of a partner; or

(2) on any date after the filing of such statement of dissolution, if such dissolution resulted from the death of a partner.

(e) CONFIDENTIALITY.—Any information submitted to the Office of Personnel Management under subsection (b) shall be used solely for the purpose of certifying an individual's eligibility for benefits under subsection (a).

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) DOMESTIC PARTNER.—The term ''domestic partner'' means an adult person living with, but not married to, another adult person in a committed, intimate relationship.

(2) BENEFITS.—The term ''benefits'' means—

(A) any benefit under the civil service retirement system under chapter 83 of title 5, United States Code, including any benefit from participation in the thrift savings plan under subchapter III of chapter 84 of such title;

(B) any benefit under the Federal employees' retirement system under chapter 84 of title 5, United States Code;

(C) life insurance benefits under chapter 87 of title 5, United States Code;

(D) health insurance benefits under chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code; and

(E) compensation for work injuries under chapter 81 of title 5, United States Code.

(3) EMPLOYEE.—

(A) With respect to Civil Service Retirement, the term ''employee'' shall have the

meaning given such term in section 8331(1) of title 5, United States Code.

(B) With respect to Federal Employees' Retirement, the term ''employee'' shall have the meaning given such term in section 8401(11) of title 5, United States Code.

(C) With respect to life insurance, the term ''employee'' shall have the meaning given such term in section 8701(a) of title 5, United States Code.

(D) With respect to health insurance, the term ''employee'' shall have the meaning given such term in section 8901 of title 5, United States Code.

(E) With respect to compensation for work injuries, the term ''employee'' shall have the meaning given such term in section 8101(1) of title 5, United States Code.

(4) OBLIGATIONS.—The term ''obligations'' means any duties or responsibilities that would be incurred by the spouse of an employee.

SEC. 3. EXEMPTION FROM TAX FOR EMPLOYER-PROVIDED FRINGE BENEFITS TO DOMESTIC PARTNERS.

Section 106 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to contributions by employer to accident and health plans) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) TREATMENT OF DOMESTIC PARTNERS.—The provisions of section 2 of the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 1998 shall apply to employees and domestic partners of employees for purposes of this section and any other benefit which is not includible in the gross income of employees by reason of an express provision of this chapter.''.

SEC. 4. FUNDING.

It is the sense of Congress that any funds necessary for the implementation of this Act should be funded from reductions in unnecessary tax benefits available only to large corporations and individuals who are in the maximum tax bracket.●

INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT

● Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the Senate reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the so-called ''ISTEA II'' bill that we've been debating for the past couple of weeks and that was approved yesterday. I thank the managers of the bill and their staff for the hard work and long hours they put in, as well as their attempts to face the very difficult task of balancing the transportation needs of the fifty states.

First, let me say that we all agree that maintaining, developing and improving our roads, bridges and transit systems is vital to our economy and our way of life. Transportation development has and will play a crucial role in the growth of this country. And the Senate reaffirmed that importance by approving significantly increased funding levels. That part of the equation, I strongly support. From the beginning, I believed we needed to do more and the Senate bill does do more, including an increase of approximately $130 million for Wisconsin highways and significant increases for transit systems as well.

That said, the other part of the equation, and the reason for which I ultimately opposed the legislation, is the issue of percentage share of total program dollars. My state of Wisconsin is one of the 20 or so donor states whose taxpayers pay more in gas tax revenues than they receive in Federal transportation funds. And one of the top issues that Wisconsinites from all across the state and from all walks of life stressed to me was the need to improve Wisconsin's share. That was certainly not the only issue, nonetheless, it is a very basic issue of fairness that we have faced every time we have sat down to write a highway bill.

And this year, perhaps more than any other, we had an historic chance to correct the donor state problem since the bill includes significant new resources. However, while this bill improves many states' shares, it actually decreases Wisconsin's share. Under the original ISTEA, my state realized an average return of 92 percent on our gas tax contributions over the life of bill. Under the Senate bill, Wisconsin would only be guaranteed a 91 percent return. Because this bill is more generous overall, Wisconsin's overall funding will go up, but on the share side, we are worse off under this bill than when we started.

Mr. President, I am pleased that additional transportation resources will be available to my state. I am also pleased that this bill maintains the principle of a strong Federal partnership, balances resources between the many different modes of transportation and continues important environmental programs. However, in the end, I felt that a vote in favor of this bill was a vote to continue an unfair system for another six years. The taxpayers of Wisconsin deserve better.●

TRIBUTE TO THE HINDU NEW YEAR

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the New Jersey Arya Samaj Mandir as it celebrates the Hindu New Year. The New Jersey Arya Samaj Mandir was incorporated to serve the religious, educational, and cultural needs of the Arya and Hindu immigrant population in New Jersey, demonstrating my state's rich and diverse heritage.

My colleagues may know that the Hindu New Year, called Holi, occurs at the advent of spring and is a time when Hindus focus on the joys of the new season and the passing of the cold, harsh winter. The day also marks a time to emphasize reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, and tolerance. I am glad to be able to contribute to this celebration as New Jersey's Arya and Hindu population gathers with family and friends to mark the coming of spring and another New Year.

Hindus in our country have contributed a great deal to America's heritage. The strength of our country is built upon the melding of its many languages, customs, and traditions, including those of the Hindu community. Our diversity is a strength. It is important that we celebrate the contribution that Hindu Americans have made to American society.●

MICHIGAN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT BIDS

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise to acknowledge a great athletic achievement in the state of Michigan. On this past Sunday evening, the NCAA selection committee announced the 64 best college teams in America to go head-to-head in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. Among this field of 64, five teams from the state of Michigan are included in the ''March Madness'' frenzy, making Michigan the most represented state in the tournament. These teams are Eastern Michigan University, Michigan State University, University of Detroit Mercy, University of Michigan and Western Michigan University. This is first time in Michigan history that five teams from the state have been in the NCAA tournament at the same time.

In their wisdom, the selection committee recognized that there are many excellent basketball programs and extraordinary talent within the state of Michigan. Not only have the two traditional Michigan powerhouse teams, Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, proven that they are among the nation's elite teams, but some smaller basketball programs have also made their mark on this season by winning some key games and finishing strong within their respective conferences.

Michigan State University ended an impressive season by tying with the University of Illinois for the Big Ten regular Season title, while the University of Michigan finished an equally impressive season by winning the first ever Big Ten Conference tournament. Both of these teams are highly seeded within their respective regions. Western Michigan finished tied for first place in the Mid-American Conference and received an at-large NCAA bid, which is their second ever NCAA berth. Eastern Michigan finished strong by winning the Mid-American Conference tournament and was pitted against Michigan State in the first round of the tournament. The University of Detroit Mercy was the Mid-Western Collegiate Conference regular season champion and also received an at-large bid to the tournament.

I am looking forward to the next few weeks to see who will be crowned NCAA National Champion. While these great teams from Michigan fight it out to see who will be crowned National Champion, one thing remains clear: this has been a great year for Michigan basketball and I dare to say, the best has yet to come. Go Michiganders!!!●

ORDER FOR RECORD TO REMAIN OPEN

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the RECORD remain open until 2 p.m. today