fund, some in unemployment insurance, and some want to put it in housing programs. But the net result is the same. It takes the money the President wanted to use to stimulate this economy and create good-paying jobs. We need to resist these amendments.

Mr. President, I understand Senator DEMINT wants to offer an amendment, and we are supposed to close at 2. So I don't know if he is prepared at this time, but if he is, I would be happy to yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. I thank my colleague. I would like to make a few comments. I am not going to offer an amendment at this time.

Mr. President, sometimes in this place it is hard to extract the truth from the words. I, frankly, don't understand the opposition to using money for transportation that has already been allocated to transportation.

I think we have had enough of saying we need to spend more money and borrow more money because the Bush administration spent too much and borrowed too much. This is a bipartisan problem. Hopefully, we will have a bipartisan solution.

What is being proposed today is we need more money for highways. The highway trust fund is running out of money. We need more money to pay unemployment benefits. They are running out of money. We would like more money for FHA loans. We have to decide do we want to use money that is already designated for purposes of our economy and helping people who don't have jobs or do we want to borrow more money and spend more money and add more money to our debt?

I don't think this situation is a good reason to say: Hey, we were bad in the past, so let's continue those practices. We are not suggesting with these amendments that we should stop the stimulus plan. We are saying we should use it for the same purposes it was set up for. Let's use it to build roads and bridges and create jobs. Let's use it to make sure those who are unemployed get their benefits. Let's use it to restimulate our housing market.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will now suspend. The Senate is ready to take a recess.

Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Chair for all the time to speak, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 3 p.m.

RECESS

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2 p.m., recessed until 3 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FRANKEN).

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND EXTENSION—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the transfer of the highway trust fund money. I do, of course, support having the money in the highway fund because so many States need to have this money and we need to assure it is there. I also support the amendments that would use the stimulus money so it would not be new money.

But I do wish to talk about the highway trust fund because I think it is important, as we are talking about this very important transportation issue for our States, that we begin the debate about whether the highway trust fund is now the appropriate vehicle for keeping our Federal highways repaired and also doing the best for every State in transportation. What concerns me is that the first reason for the highway trust fund back in President Eisenhower's day over 50 years ago has been achieved. Yet we are still continuing to have the same formulas where some States are winners and some States are losers. But every State today has the capacity to determine its own priorities and the capacity to fund those priorities, unlike 50 years ago when there were many States that had very little capacity. They had little property, they had little taxable revenue sources, and therefore there was a need for a national system of highways to assure that we had national security. That was the first reason for it—but also mobility and commerce.

Today, however, I think it is time for us to start all over. I think it is time for us to allow States to opt out of the highway trust fund.

Of course, I am speaking for the largest donor State in America. We give more back to other States than any other State. We are a State that has more highway miles than any other State; therefore, we collect more taxes. Because we are a donor State, we give the most away. If these were States that could not meet their own needs and my State of Texas was a State that had its needs covered, maybe you could argue that would be OK. But, in fact, that is not the case. In fact, Texas is facing a huge shortage in our highway funding. We now have two cities that have mass transit systems that are certainly very successful but very far behind the curve when it comes to the transportation glut on our highways. We need to have the money in Texas to start meeting our great transportation needs.

This also affects our environment, because when we have people clogged in traffic, sitting on freeways hour after hour, of course it is bad for the ability to get where you want to go, but it is also bad for the environment to have the fumes going in the air.

I think today it is time for us to start the debate. Why not let a State opt out, agree to keep in good repair the Federal highway system and allow the States to use their own taxpayer dollars for their own priorities to meet their own transportation and mobility needs? If Texas could keep all the money it raises, rather than toll roads, which are now being contemplated throughout our State, perhaps we could have a mobility plan that would include highways, rapid transit, high-speed rail, and more innovative ideas that are very costly, which we cannot afford at this time.

Obviously, today we are going to go forward with extending the trust fund and replenishing the highway trust fund because that is what people want to do because we don't have time to address the whole issue of reauthorization at this very complicated time. I wish we were not going to consider an 18 month extension in September because I think we ought to have a short-term extension, so we do have the reauthorization of the highway bill, so we can start discussing these priorities—so we can start maybe thinking outside the box. Maybe we can start all over.

The highway trust fund and the highway authorization bill is a mishmash of different projects. I don't think there is fairness in the system at all. You have donor States, you have winner States, and the winner States have all the capacity. The loser States have as much need as the winner States, and the winner States have the ability, I believe, to fund their own options.

Even though I know we are going to extend the highway bill for 18 months by the end of September, and I know we are going to replenish the highway fund today—and I wish it would be from our stimulus package so it would not be yet another deficit-inducing measure from this Congress—I think I am going to lose all the arguments I am making. But I do think it important that we bring this issue to the forefront.

There is no reason in this country today for winner States and loser States. Our States should be able to plan for themselves, make their own priorities, meet their needs, be able to be more efficient, have multimodal systems—which is what I hope for Texas—and be able to use our own tax dollars for our own needs. Were we a State that did not have needs, were we a State that was not growing, maybe we could afford to continue giving 8 cents back for every $1 we send to Washington. Maybe we could afford to leave the 8 cents in Washington.

Instead, we are getting 92 cents back for every $1 we send to Washington. That is hundreds of millions of dollars that we need for our high-growth State that has many traffic problems and congestion problems today. We will repair our highways. We would sign an agreement to repair our highways so there would be no Federal responsibility for that. But I hope this argument will be the beginning of a debate so we can instate a system that will be more in tune with today's times, 50 years after the National Highway System was created—a wonderful system that connects our country but one, now, that is finished. We have our National Highway System. We do have