

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

(The aforementioned tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the following votes: (1) vote in relation to Coburn amendment No. 91 to decrease the Federal share of project costs under airport improvement program for nonprimary airports; (2) vote in relation to Coburn amendment No. 80 to limit essential air service to locations that are 100 or more miles away from the nearest medium or large hub airport; (3) vote in relation to Coburn amendment No. 81 to limit essential air service to locations that average 10 or more enplanements per day; (4) vote on Leahy-Inhofe amendment No. 50 to amend title 1 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to include nonprofits and volunteer ground and air ambulance crew members and first responders for certain benefits, and to clarify the liability protection for volunteer pilots that fly for public benefits; and (5) final passage of the FAA reauthorization act, S. 223.

Had I attended today's session, I would have voted (1) to oppose Coburn amendment No. 91 or to support any motion to lay that amendment on the table; (2) to oppose Coburn amendment No. 80 or to support any motion to lay that amendment on the table; (3) to oppose Coburn amendment No. 81 or to support any motion to lay that amendment on the table; (4) to support Leahy-Inhofe amendment No. 50; and (5) to support final passage of the FAA reauthorization act, S. 223.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

THANKING STAFF

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, before we wrap this up entirely, there is just a couple of people I want to thank. I particularly want to thank my ranking member, whom I refer to as my cochair, Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, for her incredibly hard, smart, indefatigable commitment and pure determination to see this bill through. I could not have asked for a better partner on this bill or as a partner on the Commerce Committee. We work in sync. It doesn't mean we have to agree on everything, but it happens we usually do.

I know, and our colleagues should know, this bill simply would not have happened without her hard work, without her negotiating skills everywhere, constantly. She was tenacious in get-

ting a lot of deals done on what was the most contentious issue, slots. She was patient and she was fair. I want my colleagues and the whole world to know how much I admire her as a person and as a professional, and I am grateful she has applied her considerable expertise and legislative savvy to this effort.

I also want to take a moment to tell my colleagues that I am very disappointed that Senator HUTCHISON has chosen not to seek reelection. She has been a model public servant—she is a model public servant—who has made a real difference in the lives of Americans. She has made Texas proud. The Senate will be worse off without her. The Commerce Committee will be worse off without her. The aviation world will be worse off without her. Most importantly, the people of Texas will miss her talent and her clear ability to represent their interests at the Federal level. She is amazing.

I will reluctantly not begrudge her the opportunity to bring her considerable talents to her post-Senate life, which she fully deserves. But I have her as my partner in the Commerce Committee for 2 more years, and for that I am very grateful. We have 2 more years to team up and see what we can accomplish together and as a committee. We have a full agenda, and this bill is just the first of what I hope will be many joint successes in this Congress.

I want to take a few minutes to thank the staff who have worked so incredibly hard on this bill. The issues we deal with are very difficult. Sometimes they are very boring. And sometimes they are just persistent. You have to scratch them all the time. They are always arcane. We would not be able to do our jobs without the assistance of a very dedicated and smart staff on both sides of the aisle.

I am going to start with Senator HUTCHISON's staff first. I would like to thank Jarrod Thompson, Senator HUTCHISON's lead aviation staffer, who worked seamlessly with my staff. Such is not always the case in this body. The importance of his work on this bill cannot be overstated. He managed every issue in this bill with a calm professionalism that made a challenging process a lot easier.

I would also like to thank her staff director, Ann Begeman, who is truly a gem—that is called a jewel. Ann has been nominated to be Commissioner on the Surface Transportation Board, and she is going to be a great asset to that commission. The committee will consider her nomination soon. Not trying to look ahead too far, I hate the thought of losing her, but she is going to make a fantastic Commissioner.

Finally, I would like to recognize the work of Brian Hendricks, whose fierce tenacity was essential to getting this bill done. He was instrumental in quietly working away, constantly getting things done.

For my part, I am fortunate to have a tremendous staff, too—in my State,

in my personal office, and on the committee. I am genuinely lucky I have managed to hold on to a very talented group of people who each fundamentally appreciate it is a privilege to be in public service. If you don't have that instinct, you are not going to do a lot around here.

The staff of the aviation subcommittee is truly exceptional because Gael Sullivan never seeks recognition. I want to spend a minute on giving him the enormous credit and recognition he deserves. Gael Sullivan has spent 10 years on the subcommittee and almost 20 years as a staffer on the Commerce Committee. He knows everything there is to know about aviation. He works enormously hard day in and day out, whether we are on the floor or just trying to solve a problem of a rural airport or a small community depending on Essential Air Service. Gael is here because he is absolutely dedicated to making a difference. He has been critical to every aviation bill that we have tried on this committee. His hard work has helped produce a safer and more efficient air traffic control system and a more secure aviation system.

Working with Gael is Rich Swayze. Rich is an aviation expert as well. From his Ph.D. thesis on air service to his work at GAO, Rich has developed his aviation expertise and the committee and my Senate colleagues have benefitted from that. They may not know that, but they have. Rich has put countless hours into this bill over the last 3 years. He has worked tirelessly on helping resolve the thorniest of issues, such as, for example, slots.

Adam Duffy is the third member of my aviation team. Adam keeps the subcommittee running. Besides helping draft briefing materials for the bill and preparing points for the floor, he has done yeomen's work managing the paper—the amendments—and making sure I had what I needed. His is not a glamorous job at times, but sometimes those are the most important jobs of all.

Finally, there is James Reid. James Reid, for many years, has been a senior adviser to me on Commerce Committee issues—both in my office in the Hart Building and at the committee—including aviation. He has been the deputy staff director of the Commerce Committee since I became chair, and I don't know what I would do without him—literally don't know.

I have known James for many years. I know how smart he is. The tragedy of how things get done is that staff is never recognized for who they really are—the group who puts all of it together—and how funny he is. Now, it is an art form to get to the funny part, but he is one of the funniest people I know, and he has a good heart. I still marvel at the sheer skill he has. Whether it is working through the details of a vexing legislative dilemma or thinking through the best strategic maneuver to achieve success, James can do it all. I totally rely on him. I