

culture with German culture with French culture. Out of many, one. Had previous generations of leaders not achieved oneness, we would not be, could not be, the great Nation we are today. The Senate was added to the Constitution as a compromise. Washington, DC, was placed on the banks of the Potomac as a compromise. States were added to the union as the result of compromise. In this sense, America's ability to find compromise has always been our pathway to greatness. Our Founders established this more perfect union with the clear-eyed knowledge that came from experience that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

Division leads to failure. To make our democracy work, we all must work together. We must acknowledge that we have differences of opinion and differing points of view, but we must commit to unity. The floor of the U.S. Senate is the marketplace for ideas and it is a window into democracy that is a living testimony to the greatness and diversity of our Nation. The floor of the U.S. Senate should not be a graveyard for ideas or innovation or promise. Campaigns should stop at the threshold of this chamber. What happens in this chamber is much greater than any single Senator's political fortunes, and it is much more important than a political party's fate at the next general election. We have a sacred responsibility to the people through the Constitution, and if we orient ourselves to the next presidential election, we are failing in our duty. The U.S. Senate, at its core, by its nature, is where decisions get made. We have our ideological battles here, that is certain, but this is where consensus should be achieved. The Senate should fuel the engine that propels us to a better future, not stall that engine.

All Americans should fully participate in our government. We should register to vote and serve on the jury. We must volunteer in the schools and pay our taxes. We must teach our children about our country, their country, and prepare them for their time to lead. We must tell them that our system of government is the best that man ever devised and that it works. It works very well if we allow it to work.

This moment in history is a day where we can show our children, as well as our Founding Fathers, that this is no longer a house divided. We can show the world that our parents instilled in us the value of *E Pluribus Unum*. America's best days lay ahead if we are mutually committed to that future. It is, however, not possible unless we set aside our differences and work together for that common goal. My fellow Senators, please heed the words of Abraham Lincoln and understand that there is truth of what he said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, let me speak for a few minutes about the disappointment I have and I am sure many other colleagues have with the situation we find ourselves in with respect to the partial shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration.

My colleague from Colorado, Senator BENNET, was on the Senate floor this afternoon and spoke eloquently about how this partial shutdown is affecting his State of Colorado. I wanted to talk briefly about the similar concerns I have for my State of New Mexico.

Frankly, some in this Congress, in my view, have lost sight of what they were elected to do in Washington. Aviation is a critical piece of our transportation infrastructure, a critical piece of our economy. Yet, for nearly a week now, the Congress has failed to extend the necessary authorizations to keep the Federal Aviation Administration doing the work that needs to be done.

It has been over 5 months since the Senate passed its reauthorization bill for aviation programs. That vote was overwhelming; it was 87 to 8. So this was not a partisan bill; this was a bill supported strongly by both Democrats and Republicans.

The bill included a number of programs important to my State of New Mexico and to the entire Nation, including the Airport Improvement Program that provides grants for the construction of runways, taxiways, which help to make airports safer. These projects also create hundreds of jobs in the construction industry in my State and tens of thousands of jobs in the construction industry nationwide.

One of the most important features of the Senate's bill relates to our air traffic control system. Our current system is universally recognized as being antiquated, inefficient, and increasingly it is recognized as being unsafe. The bill we passed out of the Senate dramatically accelerates the FAA's efforts to convert the air traffic control system to one based on satellites and global positioning systems, similar to the GPS many of us have in our cars. When implemented, NextGen—the name given to this improvement of the air traffic control system—will improve safety, will increase efficiency of operations, will reduce delays, and will save fuel and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Thanks to the good work Chairman ROCKEFELLER and Ranking Member HUTCHISON in the Commerce Committee did, the Senate passed a good bill to reauthorize aviation programs. That was in February. Then in April, the House passed its own version nearly on a party-line vote. The House majority, unfortunately, chose to include partisan and divisive provisions in that legislation that were not appropriate in an aviation bill.

Let me give a little description of what those partisan and divisive provisions I am referring to are. There was

an editorial in the New York Times this morning that summed it up well. It says:

Last year, the National Mediation Board changed a rule to make it easier for airline and railroad workers to unionize. Until then, workers who did not vote in union representation elections were counted as "no" votes; after the change [this is the change by the National Mediation Board—its own rules] they are counted as abstentions. Pushed by the airline lobby, House Republicans passed a long-term FAA reauthorization bill that would have undone the rule change. The Senate's reauthorization bill, passed in February, maintained the rule.

In spite of this difference in the two bills, the Senate did appoint conferees, did begin working to resolve differences—as we should have—and working out the required compromise is never easy. Unfortunately, now the House has decided that in order to gain leverage over the Senate to accept the House anti-union provisions, there would not be any additional clean extensions of existing law.

We have had 20 extensions of existing law to just keep the Federal Aviation Administration operating while the House and Senate negotiate the final resolution of this larger bill. Unfortunately, the situation now is that the Congress's failure to extend the authorization one more time has shut down important aviation programs across the country, and 4,000 FAA employees have been furloughed and forced to go without pay. Across the Nation, important airport improvement projects are now on hold.

In New Mexico, \$26 million in funding for over two dozen projects has been stopped. These include a new firetruck for the airport in Roswell, runway projects in Raton and Santa Rosa, and snow removal equipment in Clayton and Vaughn. In Santa Fe, work on a vital new radar system has been stopped. In Albuquerque, progress has stopped on a \$10 million project to replace the airport parking apron.

What is particularly troubling to me is that the authority to collect the ticket tax has also been suspended. Why should this matter? This is the money that goes into the airport trust fund and allows us to continue to make improvements and maintain our airport infrastructure around the country. This is funding that is used to pay for safety and infrastructure projects at airports in my State and everywhere in the country. As I understand it, it amounts to about \$30 million a day being lost from that trust fund. At a time when we are being told the country is falling behind in its investments in basic infrastructure, this loss of funding is clearly going to have major impacts on airport projects down the road.

People also need to realize that the fact that the FAA is no longer able to collect the ticket tax does not mean people don't have to pay the full price they would be paying if the tax were being charged. The airlines, with very few exceptions, have announced they

are going to continue to charge the full price for tickets and pocket the extra money themselves, instead of turning it over for infrastructure projects at our airports.

So here we are. It is simply, in my view, unacceptable for the Congress not to restore to the FAA the authority to collect airline ticket taxes and to resume normal operations.

Senator ROCKEFELLER has introduced a clean extension of the aviation programs. Whatever differences there are between the two bodies in provisions in the short-term extension are trivial compared to this \$30 million a day the Nation is losing in funding for our Nation's airport projects.

We all here in the Senate, in the Congress, and in the country, are focused on the need to extend the debt limit, and that is the most urgent need we face, but in addition to that we need to restore to the FAA the authority to resume its normal operations and to resume payments into the airport trust fund. To leave for an August break without having fixed the problem of the lack of FAA authorization as well would be seriously irresponsible.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the editorial from this morning's New York Times entitled "This Is Called 'Small' Government."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, July 27, 2011]

THIS IS CALLED 'SMALL' GOVERNMENT

What has happened to the Federal Aviation Administration in the last few days should remind everyone of the costs of the Republicans' obstructionism and their slash-and-burn budget games.

Taxes on airline tickets expired on Friday when the F.A.A. lost its operating authority, including the authority to collect taxes. Passengers are rightly furious at the nation's airlines, many of which are pocketing the difference. But the masterminds of this fiasco are the House Republicans who let this happen.

The F.A.A. has also had to furlough some 4,000 workers. Needed airport construction projects—to maintain runways, build new traffic control towers and upgrade other facilities—have been halted across the country. The only good news is that the air traffic control system is still working because traffic controllers are paid from the Aviation Trust Fund, which still has a positive balance.

All of this happened after House Republicans inserted a new provision into a routine bill to temporarily extend the F.A.A.'s operational authority. The provision would end \$16.5 million in federal subsidies to 13 airports in rural communities. The bill passed the House. But Senate Democrats balked, arguing that the right place for changing policy is in the regular F.A.A. reauthorization bill—noting that the temporary extension has passed 20 times since 2007 without any additional provisions.

"If we can't put an end to these extravagant subsidies, then we will never be able to rein in spending where really hard decisions are necessary," said Tom Petri, the chairman of the House aviation subcommittee, upon submitting the bill. Talk about pound foolish. When the F.A.A. lost operational au-

thority, it lost its ability to collect \$200 million in taxes a week. These taxes would have paid for the airport subsidies in about 14 hours. There is more going on here. As we have seen in many Republican-led states, an attack on "excessive" government spending is also often a bid to break labor unions.

Last year, the National Mediation Board changed a rule to make it easier for airline and railroad workers to unionize. Until then, workers who did not vote in union representation elections were counted as "no" votes; after the change, they are counted as abstentions. Pushed by the airline lobby, House Republicans passed a long-term F.A.A. reauthorization in April that would have undone the rule change. The Senate's reauthorization bill, passed in February, maintained the rule.

Earlier this month, John Mica, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told an aviation conference that adding the airport subsidy provision to the temporary bill to keep the F.A.A. running is "just a tool" to force the Senate to give in on the union issue.

Next time voters hear Republicans talking about taking a principled stand against government spending, they should keep this sorry and cynical tale in mind.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I follow my colleague who mentioned our need to prevent default. The need we have—the reason we are here and why there will be a vote in the House and the Senate tonight—has to do with the need of our Nation to prevent default, and also, of course, the need to cut spending. Our problem is that we spend too much. Americans all around the country are calling in to Members of the House and Senate and saying: Hey, let's get things under control and let's cut the spending.

My friends on the other side of the aisle, I am happy to see with the proposals being brought forth, are beginning to understand what my constituents in Wyoming have known from the very beginning: Americans are not taxed too little, Washington spends too much. But the President seems to be more concerned about the next election than about the next generation of Americans.

I was astonished last week when the President was addressing the Nation and he talked about what his bottom line was in this whole debate. He said:

The only bottom line I have is that we have to extend this debt ceiling through the next election, into 2013.

This was the President of the United States saying this:

The only bottom line I have is that we have to extend this debt ceiling through the next election, into 2013.

Since 1962, the debt ceiling has been raised 74 times. On average, the debt ceiling is usually for about 8 months. But now the folks on the other side, and the President, are calling for the largest debt ceiling increase in history and it is designed to last a lot longer

than 8 months—almost for a year and a half, as the President wants it to go into 2013; and specifically, as he said, through the next election.

The President's Treasury Secretary has essentially said the same thing. He said:

We have to lift this threat of default from the economy for, you know, for the next 18 months. We have to take that threat off the table through the election.

Well, if the President and the Treasury Secretary get their way, they will be able to ignore the single biggest threat to our national security until after the next election. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has said: The greatest threat to our national security is the debt.

The President could have gotten what he wanted last week—which is an increase in the debt ceiling beyond the election—when the House passed its cut, cap, and balance legislation. I was one of the original cosponsors of that in the Senate. I was in favor of it, supported it, and continue to support that. Instead, the President issued a veto threat. He told Democrats in the Senate to kill it. After all, they are still the majority party.

The Senate Democrats, I believe tonight, will have the power to save our country's finances once again. They can do that by passing the Boehner plan—pass it through this body and send it to the President's desk for him to sign. Instead, the majority leader has said no Democrat—not one—will support this plan. It has what the President wants. It raises the debt ceiling. It lets us, as a nation, avoid default. But it doesn't take us beyond the election.

It is interesting. It would seem support by the Democrats for this plan would clearly signal their desire to continue working to rein in Washington's wasteful spending, to get our fiscal house in order. But that doesn't seem to be the signal the President wants to send. The Boehner plan is the only plan currently on the table that can get through the House of Representatives and protect us from default.

Republicans have put forward plan after plan. Democrats and the White House have done nothing but criticize from the sidelines. The White House Press Secretary has even said:

Leadership is not proposing a plan for the sake of having it voted up or down and likely voted down.

That is what he said. He said the Democrats have even sent a letter asking for a long-term debt increase. But how can we have a long-term debt increase if they have no plan to get there? The White House Secretary claimed recently the President's plan is well-known. He said:

There is no plan that has been offered, certainly in the last several months, about which more detail is known.

I say: Where are the details? I want to know how I could get this well-known plan and share it with my constituents back home in Wyoming. How