

we do for Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, and the Mariana Islands. You don't pay Federal income tax. That would be fair.

There are all kinds of things that aren't fair. But when it comes to intrusions by the government onto religious beliefs, the line cannot be drawn so that it excludes religious beliefs and the ability to practice them.

For anyone, especially a Supreme Court Justice, and even someone who worked for President Obama as Solicitor General, who said—and I am paraphrasing because she didn't say these words—I never did my job when it came to ObamaCare. I didn't talk to the administration about it. I didn't talk to them about what would help them when it came before the Supreme Court. So I didn't do my job as Solicitor General, and that is why I am qualified to be on the Supreme Court.

Unfortunately, the Senate bought that. That is the implied position. They bought that. She is on the Supreme Court. She lights into the Hobby Lobby attorney immediately. But to come around and say, Just pay the tax, then you can have your religious beliefs, you can practice your religious beliefs, it is not that expensive—what's next?

As a judge who has signed death penalty orders, I have struggled with that issue. I believe in some cases it is appropriate. I thought it was totally appropriate in Jasper, Texas, after three people were convicted of dragging an African American behind their truck. Once they had a fair trial, fair appeal, properly convicted, I wouldn't have had a problem with a law that said the victim's family gets to choose the truck and the terrain over which they drag the defendants to their deaths.

When we give the power to decide who gets to practice firmly held religious beliefs to a Supreme Court or to a 218-vote majority in the House, this Republic and the freedoms it has provided more than any Nation in history can't be much longer for the world—not those freedoms—not when Congress will stand by and allow those to be taken.

I think everybody that was here for that vote on ObamaCare knows good and well that if the intention of this government had been made clear that they were going to force people to go against firmly held Catholic beliefs, Christian beliefs, that bill would have never passed. And now they seek to enforce what would never have passed if their intentions had been made clear—it is before the Supreme Court. And who knows what they will do.

Mr. Speaker, my hopes and prayers are still for ongoing religious freedom promised under the First Amendment, and that they will not be taken away on our watch. But that kind of depends on the American people and the people they put in office and the people they allow to serve on the Supreme Court.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4152. An act to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1827. An act to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MESSER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the history of our country, our economic development, is predicated on our infrastructure development. Early in our history, canals, ports, postal roads, and 152 years ago, the transcontinental railroad—audacious at the time—proved to be a critical element of tying our nation together, fueling economic growth and communication.

Later, we had the interstate freeway system, which had its genesis going back over a century, nurtured in the basement of Franklin Roosevelt's White House, signed into law, and advocated by President Eisenhower.

One wonders: Could this Congress in Washington, D.C., today have produced the transcontinental railroad, the interstate highway system, provided the resources, the resolve, the research to send humans to the Moon? You have to pay for it. You have to take a risk. You have to have a plan and a design.

Sadly, it appears that that is lacking at this point.

I spent years on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which I finally left to go to Ways and Means and to serve on the Budget Committee to try and deal with the financing issue.

In 187 days, the highway trust fund is exhausted. It is not just that the reauthorization extension expires on September 30, but we have drawn the trust fund balances down to zero. It is already starting to be felt around the country. Because you cannot manage the multibillion-dollars worth of commitments that the Federal Government has made in partnership with State and local communities and the private sector without having some range of a financial cushion, probably on the order of \$4 billion.

So that means that the Federal Government is going to start delaying the release of funding and having to choose which obligations it honors well before

September 30. That means cutting back funding this summer is going to make a difference for local communities later this spring. Already, States are dealing with this uncertainty and making decisions, putting at risk, in some cases, construction seasons.

I think we have reached the point that there are no more cans to kick over or seat cushions to reach behind. If that doesn't make sense to you, sleight of hand, to use another general fund fix.

We have transferred outright over \$50 billion to the general fund since 2008, and we have backfilled by using the Recovery Act, or the so-called stimulus funding. We made an adjustment in the Tax Code dealing with provisions for retirement benefits that were adjusted that somehow gave us a little headroom that enabled us to fund a 27-month extension.

But we are running out of these fixes, and we are not giving the certainty that the private sector, local governments, State governments, that our communities need to be able to deal with the more complicated, more expensive, longer-term projects, especially those that may involve more than one State, those that may be multimodal in nature. These expensive and complicated projects require steady, stable sources of funding.

Mr. Speaker, it has been 21 years since the Federal Government last adjusted the gas tax. It was 1993. That is back when gasoline was \$1.08 a gallon. It is back when there were fewer demands in terms of the highway trust fund, when cars were less fuel-efficient.

In the course of that time, we have watched inflation eat away at the value of that 18.4 cents a gallon that people pay for their Federal gas tax, and because people are using more fuel-efficient cars and because the vehicle miles traveled have been reduced for 9 consecutive years, the amount that the individual pays per mile to support our Federal transportation infrastructure has been cut by more than 50 percent. And Congress has been dancing around this issue.

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I have proposed that we adopt the recommendation of the Simpson-Bowles Commission that was so widely heralded 3 years ago, to have a phased 3-year increase in the gas tax.

I would note that it is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, by the AFL-CIO, by local governments, by transit agencies, environmentalists, by professional groups and organizations, local officials.

It is interesting that the AAA, representing auto users, and the trucking industry have both said: Federal Government, you should raise the fuel tax—not that we are wild about the fuel tax, but because the costs of not doing it are going to cost our motorists, going to cost our trucking industry and the American economy far more than the few cents per gallon that would be paid.