

jobs if they are faced with an avalanche of new regulations? Will they be able to invest in growth if the government keeps crowding out private investment with massive borrowing and spending?

The bottom line is that there is a recipe for turning the economy around in a very strong way and providing the jobs people are going to need in order to get the work they can do and need in order to support their families. What the President has done has impeded and slowed down that growth. Of course, one can argue that he didn't create the problem, he inherited the problem, but that his policies have made it worse, not better; that we would have a stronger recovery had we not wasted that money on the stimulus program and had we not passed some of the highly regulatory and depressing legislation such as ObamaCare.

With the opportunity before us to support progrowth policies, I am convinced the private sector of this country is strong enough to rebound. We are beginning to see that in these employment numbers. If we work with businesses, understanding that they create the jobs, not the government—all we can do is to provide the best foundation for job creation—if we do that, then this eventually can be a strong economic recovery, and then we really will have something to brag about. It is my hope that in the remaining months of this year, before politics completely consumes Washington, DC, Republicans and Democrats, the House and the Senate, can work together with the President to create that kind of climate in which all Americans who want to can find economic opportunity and work.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

FAA MODERNIZATION AND REFORM ACT OF 2012—CONFERENCE REPORT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 658, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 658), to amend title 49, United States Code,

to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2011 through 2014, to streamline programs, create efficiencies, reduce waste, and improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same. Signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be up to 2½ hours of debate on the conference report equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I thank the Chair.

The problem we face here is that most people are in the air coming in this direction. Most will land around 5 o'clock. So Senator HUTCHISON and myself don't feel any particular pressure. We can talk for long periods of time and talk about other issues.

Today we are considering the FAA conference report which has been the subject of negotiations—I shudder when I say that—between the House and the Senate for much of the past year, and actually we have been working on it for much longer than that. We have been through 23 extensions. We are now looking at the possibility of a bill that will, in fact, last for 4 years, which will be the best news that the airline industry ever had, that the people who work for the airline industry ever had, that the people who work to improve the safety of the airline people ever had, including those who are doing a new traffic control system. So I am very happy that, as we call it, the FAA Modernization Reform Act of 2012 will extend the authorities through 2015. As the Presiding Officer is aware, we have done this for 2 months, 3 months—time after time after time—and it makes it impossible to negotiate and it is terribly destabilizing for the aviation industry as well as the Federal Aviation Administration.

This agreement is going to provide a lot of stability to the FAA—they will be happy about that—and it will make certain there is adequate funding to support the agency's mission.

The bill takes concrete steps to modernize our air traffic control system. I am excited beyond words to be able to say that sentence because it will take us into a new era that will bring much more efficiency, more planes will be able to take off and land and, in so doing, do it much more safely, being watched from space rather than from radar, which is what we do now.

This bill is going to make the air transportation system safer than ever before and make certain that small communities have access to critical air service. I will speak more about that.

It will also make sure that the U.S. aviation industry remains competitive and remains strong. We are that way in

the world. We do lead in exports on aviation and the Federal aviation industry continues to be the gold standard for safety. That is not to say we have not had problems, but we have been solving those problems.

This has been a long and sometimes arduous process. I think my colleague Senator HUTCHISON would agree with that. Many compromises were made to get us here. Compromises in the present atmosphere are not easy. Conversations are not easy. Compromises are very difficult. While no one got everything they wanted, the bill will permit us—I believe Senator HUTCHISON would agree—to achieve our shared goals.

The agreement will allow us to pass a comprehensive, again, 4-year FAA reauthorization. The legislation we have before us now will move our aviation system forward. It will not be in neutral. People who run the system, the folks who take care of airplanes and who run the companies, will be absolutely thrilled if this bill passes, which I expect it to do.

In this era of very scarce resources, we still have managed to produce a bill that provides the FAA the money it needs to carry out its mission. Without going into too much detail, we had to make a compromise on that. But, frankly, that was a compromise that was agreed to and, I believed, was reasonable in terms of the other way of looking at things. So it is stability.

The funding authorized for the Airport Improvement Program, which is very important, and the facilities and equipment accounts, which are just gobbledygook to most people, will give much needed support to aviation infrastructure projects and planning across our Nation. It is a blueprint.

Over \$3 billion a year is provided through the Airport Improvement Program to provide airport grants that will make a real difference in the Nation's airspace system and the people who use it every day. We will create and we will sustain jobs in every State, and we will continue to make substantial investments in our Nation's airports. Based on Department of Transportation estimates, the Airport Improvement Program alone supports over 100,000 jobs annually. I will say later on in these remarks that there are about 10 million people who work because of something called aviation in this country—10 million people.

For communities in West Virginia, having up-to-date airports is absolutely critical to our future. The investments we make through the Airport Improvement Program will help the country greatly—not just West Virginia but the entire country.

With this bill, as I said, nearly \$3 billion will also be provided each year for the facilities and equipment account which basically funds the new air traffic control system. I have said this 10 times from this floor: Mongolia has that; we do not. They have globally positioned—very accurate reading—not