Now, I have a picture here. I would like to zero-in on this. This is a drone, the size that I just showed with my arms, flying past a palm tree in my State of Florida. But if that drone goes higher—higher than the FAA limit right now of 400 feet—and gets into the flightpath of an incoming airliner or one that is outbound, then we have a major disaster on our hands.

We want creativity. We want inventiveness. This is a new technology and it is great. Look at what we can do now with aerial photography so we don't have to rent an airplane. Look, however, how it is being used. Did my colleagues know drones are being used to go over a prison wall and deliver contraband? How about the reverse: Getting messages out? So, obviously, the government is going to have to get into it one way or another.

Now, one thing that we could do with this technology is we could require the software to be put in these drones that would prohibit it from getting close to an airport. There is that kind of technology. I suppose we could put the software in it that would prohibit it from getting above a certain altitude. But the question is this: When somebody breaks those limits, how do we go about identifying them? Should there be some kind of registration number? Should there, in fact, even be licensure? We probably don't have to worry about commercial uses such as aerial photography because those users are going to be very careful. However, for the hobbyist or the kid who can now go and purchase a drone, we see the probabilities of an accident waiting to happen.

Now, I don't have the answer. But in the next two months, as we are getting ready on the FAA bill, we are going to have to come up with some answers.

So I raise this issue for the Senate. It is a real problem. We have to face it. We have to address it. We have to prevent these kinds of terrible accidents that can occur if we do nothing.

I intend to do something on the commerce committee.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

FAST ACT

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about something that was overlooked late in the year as we passed the surface transportation bill—the highway bill. It was called the Fix America's Surface Transportation Act or the FAST Act. It wasn't very fast.

I am glad to see the President signed the law last month. It is one of the things people understand they can't do for themselves—along with defending the country—having a transportation system that works and taking advantage of who we are as a nation, being strategically located in as fine a place as you can be to do business, to create jobs and opportunity all over the world.

The FAST Act in my State would provide $5 billion to Missouri over the next 5 years to improve our roads, bridges, and rail system. That is the amount of money we will send in over the next 5 years. We are either slightly a donee State or slightly a donor State. We might be better off if we kept all the money, but that is not what is happening right now.

We are certainly better off if we know what the highway program looks like for 5 years. An effective transportation plan is good for the country, but it is particularly good where I live. If you look at any map of the river structure of the country or any railroad map of the country or any highway map of the country, a significant part of coming together of all three of those—rail, water, and highways—all happens right where we live.

Because we are the hub of the railway, highway, and water systems, it is very important that we have a system that makes the most of that where we live. When I had a chance to speak to the Missouri House of Representatives in Jefferson City over the first week of the year, I told the Missouri General Assembly that this is a competitive advantage for us, but we need to make the most of it. When we had the highway bill that we have had in the 5 years the Presiding Officer and I have served in the Senate, nobody could rely on anything.

This is the first 5-year bill we have had in 17 years. But before 2009, we just ended a 4-year highway bill. Then, since 2009, we have had 37 short-term extensions of the highway bill. So if there is anything fast about the FAST Act, it certainly wasn't quickly getting to a highway bill that works. The longest of those 37 extensions was 2 years. I think the second longest may have been 6 months. Not only is that no way to build roads and bridges, but it is clearly no way for legislators to have an idea in our home States of how to respond to that plan. By the time you try to figure out how to respond to the plan, how you can maximize it to the advantage of your State—my State or anybody else's—and how we can maximize that plan to our advantage, the plan is over with.

By the time you have a legislative session, look at the plan, the State department of transportation analyzes it, and you start talking about it, the 6-month extension of the highway bill is over—or even the 2-year extension. There are all kinds of studies that indicate a significant loss of what you can buy with the money you are spending if the highway bill is 2 years or less. I think the discount is about 30 percent because people don't bid as competitively as they would bid to be part of those projects. They are not willing to move people to where a major project needs to occur. They cannot buy the equipment and plan to depreciate it out. So you wind up paying a lot more than you would have to pay. That is where we have been since 2009.

The States have been the place where they didn't have any way to maximize a Federal program because the Federal program was gone before they could really calculate how they could most take advantage of it.

So I hope that now we do one of the things that people really expect the government to do—one of the reasons they pay the taxes and one of the reasons the tax for transportation has always been pretty well received. People think: OK, I pay a tax when I fill up my car with gasoline, fill up my car with diesel, fill up my truck with diesel or fill up my truck with fuel. When I do that, I pay a tax and then I use the roads. So that seems fairer to people than most taxes, but we haven't had a system that allowed us to make the most of that.

In our State, 22 percent of the major roads of Missouri are now considered in poor condition. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives us a C, and this is one of the areas where we would want to be an A. If you are a C instead of an A, the average Missouri motorist pays about $400 more a year in extra maintenance because we are trying to maintain a system that has gotten into poor condition.

Some 44 percent of our highways are congested. Congestion costs motorists a lot of money in just wasted fuel. You don't have to spend much time around Washington in a car to realize how much time you can waste in traffic, but we see that happening more and more all over the country.

In our State we have more bridges than any other State, and they are in among the worst conditions of the country, with 30 percent of our bridges rated as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. There was just a TIGER grant awarded to replace the Champ Clark Bridge across the Mississippi River, which I believe was built in 1919. If that bridge has to be shut down before it can be replaced or would have been shut down, the detour to get to where that bridge gets you is 75 or 80 miles driving around to where that bridge currently takes people.

We have many bridges in our State that are county bridges; they are not State bridges. I have talked to county commissioners, and one of their principal concerns is this: What about the fund that helps us with our off-system bridges? Senator CASEY and I created a fund to do this in 2012. We added it to the 2012 highway bill. Since then, it has provided about $775 million annually to States. Out of that State fund, whenever you are part of the off-system road system, the State pays 85 percent of a bridge that the county otherwise in most cases wouldn't be able to replace. We have one county that I think

has 4,000 people and 40 bridges. That is a lot of bridges for 4,000 people to try to be responsible for. It is our smallest county, and that is maybe a different debate, but they have 40 bridges. We have many bridges in our State.

The county road-county bridge system has about 50 percent of all the bridges we have in Missouri. The bridge system and the highway system are critical to us if we want to compete. As the middle of the country grows things and makes things, it is a great opportunity for us to get things—not just onto the river system and onto the railway system—all over the country and all other the world. Transportation really matters.

The FAST Act—and I have a hard time saying the FAST Act without thinking how slow the FAST Act really was in getting passed—creates two freight-based programs that allows States to compete for funding for major projects. In a world where we want to compete, we need to figure out how we can compete more effectively. How do you get things to places where they are made into products? How do you get things that are grown and need to be shipped to places? How do you get them to places in a better way? In the life of this bill, the State of Missouri should receive about $150 million to look at those freight projects because those projects and the effective use of how you get things to places create jobs.

The Missouri Department of Transportation has already developed a State freight plan to encourage strategies. Now this bill makes that plan more of a reality.

The FAST Act also includes some help for our Nation's rail systems. I had a bill, the Track, Railroad, and Infrastructure Network Act, that when you are improving a railroad system, it allows you to have the same kind of streamlining that we were recently able to provide for highway construction. You don't get caught up on something that has to be needlessly litigated for long periods of time when, in fact, what you really need to be doing is getting that highway finished in the highway part of this bill or have the expedited ability for these issues to go to the top of the list and to get resolved so that people can get the things they make where they want to get them. They can get the things they buy quicker than they would get them otherwise. They can get to work, they can get to school, and they can get to the hospital when somebody is sick.

I mentioned that, particularly because we just had floods in our State in the last few days. For a while, Interstate 70, Interstate 44, and Interstate 55—all three—were closed. There was a time when two of those were closed at the same time. They were closed for 24 to 36 hours, and it makes a difference in how people are able to live their lives.

The Federal Permitting Improvement Act that I cosponsored was also included in the bill. This is a piece of legislation that Senator PORTMAN and Senator MCCASKILL introduced. It will now allow better coordination between the deadline setting for permitting decisions—the same kind of thing for highways that we are also doing for railroads—to make this important transportation system work.

Looking at the United States, Winston Churchill once said we were the best located country in the world—an ocean on either side and neighbors that we could deal with north and south. And the ability to get anywhere would be another addition to that location advantage we have.

The FAST Act includes two important provisions to give relief to electricity providers. One is a law that creates emergency route working groups for electricity and other things. If you have a vehicle that needs to get from Oklahoma to Joplin, MO, after the tornado, you don't have to get it especially permitted and authorized to come across that State line in what has been declared an emergency.

The same thing would have happened in recent days in several places in our State close to a border, close to the equipment they need. The flood means there is an emergency. Now those vehicles can cross the State line without having to have the special permission that needed to be received in the past.

Secondly, the Grid Reliability Act that I introduced with my Missouri colleague Senator MCCASKILL simply improves reliability. If you have two conflicting Federal agencies—one saying you can only use that plant so much of the time and another saying we have an electric emergency—you have to use every facility you have to provide the electricity that is needed, and that can now be done.

There are many committees of jurisdiction here. The commerce committee that I am a member of is certainly the committee that is focused on infrastructure, focused on ports and other things that I haven't mentioned a lot but that are very important.

I have mentioned at other times on the floor of the Senate that this is one of the great accomplishments of the first year of this Congress that may easily go overlooked, but I can tell you that county officials all over America and State legislative bodies all over America are looking at this bill and figuring out how do we use this as a way to move our transportation system into the 21st century, how do we use this to help provide opportunity, and how do we use this to help provide the kinds of jobs that provide the kind of pay that families need to live on and to live the kinds of lives they would like to live.

I look forward to seeing this bill implemented. I think all of us need to watch carefully to be sure that we are making the most of one of the responsibilities of government. Defending the country and having a transportation system that works are both things that individuals and families can't do for themselves. I believe the FAST Act gives us a better chance than we have had since 2009 to look at the future with a greater degree of certainty and to work in an area that is critically important for the country but even more important for Missouri and others who live in the middle of these transportation networks, where they come together.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMERICAN SAFE ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, tomorrow the Senate will vote on a motion to proceed to H.R. 4038, also known as the American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act. This bill would prohibit the admission into the United States of refugees from Iraq or Syria or any other refugee who has been present in those countries in the last 5 years unless that person receives a thorough background investigation.

The bill would require the Director of the FBI to certify to the Secretary of Homeland Security and also to the Director of National Intelligence that each of those persons has received a background investigation that is sufficient to determine whether he or she is a threat to the security of the United States. Then, as a second provision, the Secretary of Homeland Security, with the unanimous concurrence of the Director of the FBI and the Director of National Intelligence, would have to certify to Congress that each refugee is not a security threat; and finally, it requires the Homeland Security inspector general to conduct a risk-based review of all certifications for the admission of Iraqi and Syrian refugees made by the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and the Director of National Intelligence each year and provide an annual report to the Congress.

This bill passed the House overwhelmingly and in a bipartisan manner in November. I intend to vote on the motion to proceed tomorrow. This is a conversation we need to have in the Senate. This is not an issue we can take lightly, despite the plea from President Obama in his State of the Union Address. We cannot allow America's welcome mat to become a doormat for radicalized Islamic extremists who are hardwired to kill innocent people and destroy our way of life.

Unless and until the United States can figure out a foolproof screening process to prevent terrorists from masquerading as refugees to infiltrate our neighborhoods and our communities, President Obama needs to listen