

on his own experience in this field. We have talked about it many times. It is my understanding he is also a cosponsor of the Byrd-Gramm-Warner-Baucus amendment.

The Senate has very few legislative days comparatively this session, perhaps as few as 100, given that we, by necessity, must leave early in the fall given the elections this year, and, therefore, it would be my hope that the leadership could judge this period within the next few weeks as a suitable time within which to bring up this very important piece of legislation.

It had been my hope and understanding based on commitments made last fall that the Senate would be debating this bill at this time.

I want to share with my Senate colleagues my strong concerns about the impacts of a prolonged delay in considering this bill on our state transportation partners and on employment in many industries engaged in highway and bridge construction activities.

This important legislation to reauthorize our nation's surface transportation programs was reported unanimously from the Committee on Environment and Public Works on October 1, 1997.

We all know of the difficulties that delayed consideration of this bill last October. Because of this, a short-term extension of ISTEA was enacted to provide a modest amount of funding to our states to keep our safety, highway construction and transit programs going.

Many expressed reservations about the wisdom of providing a brief extension of ISTEA funds for fear that Congress would not promptly consider the full reauthorization bill early this session. Regrettably, those concerns appear to be coming true.

Mr. President, since October 1, our states have been struggling to manage their safety, highway and transit programs on a temporary, stop-gap basis. The ISTEA Extension Act provided only approximately six-months worth of funds—enough to last from October to this March. So, in approximately 7 weeks, our states will have exhausted the funds released in the short-term ISTEA Extension bill.

I want to be sure that my colleagues also understand the impacts of the May 1st deadline provided in the ISTEA Extension bill. That provision prohibits states from spending any federal highway dollars after May 1st. So, states who want to prudently manage their federal dollars are prohibited from stretching them out to last during the summer construction season.

During consideration of the short-term extension bill last October, this May 1st limitation was viewed as a way to ensure that all states would be in a similar position—absent passage of a new surface transportation reauthorization bill.

It was my view that based on the assurances that S. 1173, the ISTEA II reauthorization bill, would be the first order of business this session, the May 1st deadline seemed appropriate.

If the Senate does not turn to consideration of this critical legislation until after the Budget Resolution, as some of my colleagues are requesting, the entire highway construction season for many states is in jeopardy.

Waiting for the completion of the Budget Resolution before proceeding to ISTEA is an irresponsible course of action, especially since the estimated completion of the Budget Resolution varies greatly.

Mr. President, according to AASHTO, the Association of State Secretaries of Transportation, approximately 70 percent of all road and bridge construction, including critical maintenance work, occurs during the peak summer months of June, July and August.

States must be able to plan today for that work to occur this summer. Projects must be advertised, contractors selected and bids awarded before projects are ready for construction. This process takes months to complete. Our states today are not proceeding with this planning because there is no certainty as to when new transportation funds will be forthcoming.

We already know that many states are beginning to severely cut back on their construction schedules.

For these reasons, I believe the Senate must move promptly to consider this legislation. Time is slipping by and millions of jobs are hanging in the balance—awaiting our action.

These jobs are not just road builders and contractors, but thousands of suppliers of asphalt, stone, steel, and heavy manufacturing equipment. All work will be idle this summer unless we take action soon.

Mr. President, it is also important to note that delay in considering this legislation not only impacts highway construction activity in our states, the delay also puts our nation's safety and transit programs in jeopardy.

Highway safety grant programs received only half a year funding in the ISTEA extension bill. Without additional funds major safety initiatives involving safety belt use, child seat use, drunk driving prevention and motor carrier safety programs will cease.

Mr. President, we must make every effort to ensure that these serious disruptions in our nation's highway, safety and transit programs do not occur. Let's move forward today to consider legislation that was unanimously supported by the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, first, I commend the senior Senator from Virginia for his very helpful remarks. I am a very strong believer that we must take immediate action on ISTEA. I think it is critical for the Nation, especially in my State, which as the Senator pointed out, those of us in the northern tier probably have about the

shortest season, along the State of Maine and the top of New Hampshire. So we are desperate for action.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his remarks. I wish to add, it is not only the short season but the funding profile. In a number of these States, the reserves are going to expire in that period of time. It is my judgment that we cannot pass an extension in order to allow them a period within which to have these expenditures beyond May 1. So that is a second reason. I thank the Senator for his kind remarks.

RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today I voted in support of renaming Washington National Airport as the Ronald Reagan National Airport.

I am aware of the concerns about the need for local control over the airport. That's why I voted in favor of the Daschle Amendment that would have given the Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority the final say over renaming the airport. I have always been a strong supporter of local control over National Airport.

However, in the end, I decided that the decision to rename National Airport should rise above party politics. My decision to support S. 1575 was a personal one.

It's no secret that I didn't always agree with President Reagan's policies. As a matter of fact, when it came to politics, President Reagan and I disagreed quite often. However, Ronald Reagan and I shared one important thing: our respect for the Presidency.

President Reagan devoted much of his life to serving the people of this country—first as the Governor of California, then as our President. For that reason, he deserves our respect. He has mine. No matter how different our political viewpoints were, I have always respected President Reagan and always will.

In the twilight of his distinguished life, President Reagan and I have something else in common. Like the President, my father suffered from Alzheimer's disease. I know how devastating this illness is and the strength it requires from a family. My thoughts and prayers are with Mrs. Reagan and all of the President's family. One thing I learned during my father's illness was the importance of gestures. Renaming National Airport as the Ronald Reagan National Airport is a gesture that I support.

Today, like many of my fellow Senators, I saluted President Reagan. While I would have preferred that the decision was made by the Airports Authority, I believe it is the end that matters, not the means. That is why I voted in favor of this bill.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the distinguished Senator from North Dakota.