known conservative publisher and financier who thought that the Foster case should be reopened, who has helped publicize allegations of wrongdoing by the President. Who knows what the status of that job offer is now?

In order for people to have confidence in the results of an investigation, that investigation must be nonpartisan and perceived to be nonpartisan. That is not the case when it comes to Mr. Starr. My friend from Pennsylvania, Senator SPECTER, as a former prosecutor, fully appreciates that principle as well. I understand he, too, has questioned the wisdom of having Mr. Starr head an investigation into the alleged affair since his activities have raised such an appearance of partisanship. I again urge Mr. Starr to do what is in the interests of the country and to consider whether his judgment has been so affected, whether he is now so driven to achieve a result, that he should reconsider his own role in the process.

The Senator from Vermont must conclude that Prosecutor Starr has not used his power responsibly and has failed his duty. Kenneth Starr is not the impartial, neutral and independent prosecutor the American people need now and the President, as would any American, deserves.

I predicted that his investigation may mark the death knell of the independent counsel statute. Before it is reauthorized, we ought to take a hard look at safeguards and accountability here. To have a nation on the brink of war preoccupied with affairs of the bedroom rather than of state is an abomination. More time has been spent on weekend talk shows talking about a White House intern than on the President's decision whether to use force against Iraq.

The good news is that while the rest of the country may be distracted by whom Mr. Starr will next drag before his grand jury, the President and his administration are properly focused on speaking to the American people about the circumstances that brought us to the brink of battle. The administration's preparations for battle surely helped bring about the proposed agreement the United Nation's Secretary General Kofi Annan has reached with Iraqi officials, and I remain hopeful that diplomacy, backed by the commitment to use force, will result in a peaceful resolution of this standoff. I look forward to reviewing the details of that agreement.

Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their forbearance, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I listened with interest to the presentation by Senator BYRD, the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, on the subject of the highway bill and his desire, and the desire of so many others in this Chamber, to see that the piece of legislation that authorizes spending on highways and roads, the building and repairing of our country's infrastructure, be brought to the floor of the Senate, be debated and go to conference so that we can get this bill done and tell the Governors and the other people in this country who are waiting for this Congress to do its work that we have finally finished the job. This is not some idle piece of legislation that either may or may not be enacted into law. The Congress has a responsibility to deal with the issues of this country's infrastructure, especially bridges and roads and safety on our highways, and all of those issues are in the body of this legislation.

This legislation was supposed to have been enacted by this Congress last year. Now we are told by some that last year's business must wait until we have considered next year's budget. That is preposterous. We should bring that bill to the floor now. We were told it would be the first item of business on the Senate calendar when we reconvened in January. It was not. Today we will take up campaign finance reform. I am pleased that we are going to do that. But we should take up, expeditiously, the highway bill, debate it and pass it and get it to conference.

The highway bill, investing in our country's infrastructure, is about jobs, economic expansion, retaining and creating a first-class transportation system. For a first-class economy to exist, it must have a first-class transportation system, and that is what this issue is about. Every day, people pull up to the gas pumps and put some gasoline in their automobiles. When they do so, they pay money, through a tax on every gallon of that gasoline, that goes into a trust fund that is to be used in the highway bill that we are required to authorize. The taxes are already paid. The question is, will we use that money to invest in this country's bridges and roads? Those who are driving around this country know there is plenty yet to do. There is a big job ahead of us, and the quicker we get this legislation out of the Congress the better for this country.

So, I appreciate the Senator from West Virginia, the Senator from Montana, the Senator from Texas, Senator GRAMM, and others who have repeatedly come to the floor of the Senate saying this is not a partisan issue, this is not about parties; this is about investment in our country and that we finish the work we didn't get done last year and bring this important piece of legislation to the floor and pass it as soon as possible.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to turn just for a moment to the issue of campaign finance reform which we will take up this afternoon at 3 p.m. This is an issue, also, that was discussed some last year and, by agreement, is to be brought to the floor of the Senate this afternoon. Since our last discussion on this issue, I want to call my colleagues' attention to two pieces of information in the newspaper dealing with the two special elections to the Congress that have been held in the interim period. One was in New York, a special election to fill a vacancy in New York. It says:

> RNC [Republicans National Committee] Invests Heavily in ''Issue'' Attack Ads; $800,000 spent in New York House race.

It's not hard to figure out who won this race. Mr. President, $800,000 of outside money called ''issue ads,'' unregulated by the current rules on campaign finance—corporate money, unlimited quantities of money from any given source stuck into a big pot and then sent into a district by a political party. And it is declared, under current circumstances and with current court decisions, that this is not a part of the investment in those races. This nearly $1 million, with other funds included, was brought into the system in the form of issue ads—sham ads that were clearly direct 30-second advertisements expressly waged for one purpose, and that was to attack and destroy a candidate of the other party. This was done, by the way, with a legal form of cheating made possible by today's campaign finance law and current court decisions permitting issue ads, not so thinly disguised, to be waged in unlimited quantity using unlimited corporate money, unlimited individual money and undisclosed so that no one, no one in this country, will discover where the money came from. That is what is wrong with this current system.

We just had more recently a race in California. Same result; different amounts. Two different groups, large amounts of money coming into so-called issue advertising. Do they have a right to do this? Yes, they do. But do they have a right to wage advertisements in political campaigns with money that can come in huge blocks donated by corporations or very wealthy people to the tune of $50,000, $100,000 or $500,000 and then go into a State and use it in a political race in a Federal election and never have to disclose where the money came from? I don't think that's fair.

If anybody on the floor of the Senate, given what we have seen in the recent races in this country, can stand and say, ''Gee, campaign finance reform, there's nothing wrong here, things are just fine,'' if anybody can honestly stand on the floor of the U.S. Senate and say things are just fine, we have no problems with campaign finance reform, I submit that they have not watched what is happening around the country.

We passed a piece of campaign finance reform legislation in 1974, and the rules since 1974 have been bent and twisted and people have gone under them and over them, and the result now, not only because of what has happened with those rules but also because

of some court decisions, is that we have a campaign finance system in total chaos.

I come to the floor today to support the McCain-Feingold bill which will be voted on this week by the U.S. Senate. We have some Members of the Senate who have stood and said, ''We intend to filibuster; we don't think that anything should be passed by the Congress; we believe anything that Congress does limits someone else's speech.'' And, in effect, I guess they are saying there ought not be any rules.

We are told somehow that money is speech in politics: The more money you have, the more speech you have, the more you are able to speak. Some of us believe that there ought to be in politics campaign finance reform that begins to set some reasonable limits on what kind of money is spent in political campaigns. We think that the current regime of campaign finance is just completely spiraling out of control, and we think the McCain-Feingold bill, while not perfect, is a good piece of legislation for this Congress to enact.

Mr. President, I also intend to offer, if I am allowed in the context of these debates, one additional piece of legislation I would like to mention just for a moment. Federal law currently provides that all television stations must offer candidates for Federal office the lowest rate on their advertising rate card for commercials for a certain amount of time preceding the election. To repeat, under current law, we say candidates are entitled to the lowest rate on the rate card for political advertising for a certain period prior to the election.

Everyone has a right to put on the air what they wish to put on the air about their opponent. In politics, unlike most other forms of competition, the normal discourse is to say, ''There's my opponent. Look at what an awful person that opponent is. Let me tell you 18 awful things about my opponent.'' Is that the way you see airlines advertise? ''Look at my competing airline over here. Let me tell you about how awful they are, how awful their maintenance record is.'' I don't think so. Is that the way automobile companies advertise? No. It is the way people in politics advertise because it has worked.

My point is this. I am going to offer an amendment that says we will change the Federal law that requires the lowest rate on the rate card for the 60 days prior to elections. We will say that the television stations are required to offer that lowest rate only to television commercials that are 1 minute in length and only in circumstances where the candidate appears on the commercial 75 percent of the time.

Why do I do that? Because I would like candidates to start taking some ownership of their commercials instead of the 30-second slash-and-burn commercial that the candidate never appears on. Oh, everybody has a right to continue to run those. However, we are not required, in my judgment, to tell television studios they must offer the lowest rate for these kinds of ads.

Air pollution in this country is a problem. We have been concerned about air pollution for some long while. One form of air pollution in this country is the kind of political commercial that has been very successful. I don't deign to suggest now we can ban it. We can't. Free speech in this country and free political speech allows anybody to do anything they want in their campaigns in a 30- or 60-second ad.

But I believe we ought to give an incentive for those who put commercials on the air during political campaigns that say to the American people, ''Here's what I stand for, here's what I believe, here's what I want to fight for as we debate the future of this country,'' in which the candidate himself or herself asserts positions that they think ought to be a part of public discourse and public debate. It seems to me we ought to try to provide incentives for that by saying the lowest rate card in campaigns, the lowest rate on the bottom of the card, will go to commercials that are at least 1 minute in length and on which the candidate appears 75 percent of the time.

I don't know if we are going to get to that. I intend to offer it as an amendment.

First and foremost, I rise to say I support the McCain-Feingold bill. I think Senator MCCAIN and Senator FEINGOLD have done a good job. Is it perfect? No. It is an awfully good start to try to bring some order and establish some thoughtful rules to a campaign finance system that is now a mess.

I want to be involved in the debate in the coming hours, when I hear people stand on the floor of the Senate and say, ''Gee, we think the campaign finance system is wonderful,'' because I want to ask them what they have been reading, what they have been watching. Not the campaigns that I have seen, not the reports that I have seen about campaign finance awash in soft money, awash in issue ads financed by soft money flying all over the country to pollute the air waves, that never allow the American people to understand who was the donor, who put in half a million dollars to go after this or that candidate. That has become a perversion of fair rules and fair standards in campaign finance reform, and I hope when we pass McCain-Feingold we will finally begin to make some order and some thoughtful response to campaign finance reform.

I thank the President, and I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

SENATOR RIBICOFF

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, let me say to my colleague from Connecticut, I imagine he came to the floor to speak about Senator Ribicoff. I will not be long. I will say, although I did not have a chance to know Senator Ribicoff, I know so much about him. He was a great Senator. I pass on my sympathy and love to the State of Connecticut and his family.

ISTEA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, let me also thank my colleagues from West Virginia and North Dakota for talking about ISTEA, the transportation bill, which is all about investment in infrastructure, which is all about investment in our economies. And Minnesota is another State that awaits anxiously for us to take up this piece of legislation and pass it.

SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to talk about 2 issues, and I want to talk about them briefly.

First of all, I would like to talk about this past weekend. I feel as if I speak on the floor of the Senate with a sense of history. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, said when he went to Iraq that he considered this to be a sacred mission. I think he was right. I think it was very important and is very important for our country and the international community to have resolve with Saddam Hussein and to make it clear that it is extremely important that there be unhindered inspection so that we, in fact, know what exactly is going on in Iraq and, for that matter, for other countries, I wish it would be the same in terms of development of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President, I have to say this from the floor of the U.S. Senate. I believe as a Senator that war is always the last option. When you can talk instead of fight and when you can work out a peaceful solution and when diplomacy works and where there is a nonviolent resolution to a conflict, the world is better off for it. We should have no illusions, though sometimes people come to the floor of the Senate and people talk to each other and we get all pumped up and we talk about going to war and how awful Saddam Hussein is. I certainly agree he is a very cruel—very cruel—man. But, Mr. President, there is no question that if military action was to be necessary, a lot of innocent people would die. One child, one mother, one civilian in Iraq is one too many. One of our soldiers is one too many.

I am prayerfully thankful that Saddam Hussein seems to have understood the importance of these demands and, most important of all, because of the strong position that our country has