

while he is a Republican, our Democratic Governor in Oklahoma, Gov. Brad Henry, is a very strong supporter of this now-confirmed nominee. Also, my predecessor, David Boren, who is now President of the University of Oklahoma, was a very strong supporter of this individual. I quoted him a few times during this process, as to how outstanding this candidate is.

I would like to share an experience I had 41 years ago. A man named Ralph Thompson, who is currently a senior status Federal judge in Oklahoma in the same Western District in which his son-in-law has been confirmed this morning, and I, and another person named David Boren, 41 years ago, were elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives. I remember it so well because in February of 1967, 40 years ago this year, we all three came to Washington, DC, for the first time. That is, State legislators Ralph Thompson, Dave Boren, and of course myself. David Boren's father was a Congressman so he had a pretty good entree into the Capitol. I remember so well the three of us were walking around the Capitol at night—my first time ever being in the Capitol area of Washington. I remember, after walking through Statuary Hall and all these great features we have in our Capitol, that we kind of professed to each other, we decided one day—Ralph Thompson and David Boren and I—we said we would like to be Members of the Congress, either in the House or in the Senate. But Ralph Thompson said: Or a judge in the U.S. district court.

As it turned out, David Boren was a Member of the Senate; I am a Member of the Senate; and Ralph Thompson became—I believe he will go down in history as maybe being the outstanding Federal district judge in the history of Oklahoma. I have heard so many people talk about that.

I knew Ralph so well at that time—keep in mind, this is 40 years ago—and his beautiful wife Barbara, whom I might add has been Mother of the Year and received every possible honor you could have. Lisa, Maria and Elaine—they cranked out three little girls, and Elaine was the girl who later married Timothy DeGiusti. Get the connection? You have a great judge and then you have a son-in-law who is going into the same Western District of Oklahoma to replace him. It is an unusual situation. But this is one of these wonderful things that can happen in this country of ours. I am so happy this is behind us now and it happened prior to the August recess.

AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me mention something else I think is critical. I have heard ugly rumors that the President of the United States might end up vetoing what we call the WRDA bill, the Water Resources Development Act. Let me say I don't understand. I am coming from a conservative per-

spective. I am ranked by the American Conservative Union, No. 1 out of 100 most conservative Member. Yet I am saying to you there are two things we ought to be spending money on in this country. One is national defense and the other is infrastructure.

We have a crisis in our infrastructure. The big bill on transportation infrastructure we passed a year ago is going to do nothing more than maintain what we have now, and it is anticipated in 20 years we will increase our traffic by 50 percent. What are we going to do?

The same thing is true with the Water Resources Development Act. We have not had a reauthorization in 7 years. It should happen every other year.

When you say I don't care if this thing is \$10 billion or \$20 billion, the amount is not significant because it is not spending money, it is authorizing. If we authorize something—hopefully, we will pass this bill today. If we authorize something, it may never be appropriated or it may be appropriated 10 years down the road. So it does not have any remote effect on the budget today.

I think it is dishonest for people to say this is somehow a spending bill and therefore we should vote against it. That is not true at all. I have the history of this body right here in my hand, and I have given several presentations on this recently. I say to my friend from Montana, who is new in this Chamber, this discussion has been going on between appropriators and authorizers since 1816.

In 1867, they realized they needed to segregate the functions of authorization and appropriations so they established the appropriators, the Appropriations Committee. That was a good thing. But what happened on that, which has been the case for a long time, the appropriators slowly took over a little bit at a time so they ended up authorizing their own appropriations. That is what we don't want.

Let me give an example. In the Senate Armed Services Committee, on which I am honored to sit, we go through all types of items, such as missile defense, as an example. We will have the boost phase and the mid-course phase and the terminal phase and we will have maybe two systems on each one. They are not redundant, but there are many people who say: Wait a minute. Maybe we should do away with that system because we can save this much money.

But take the midcourse. We had the Aegis System and then we had the THAAD system in the terminal phase. These are not redundant because they take care of an incoming missile from different areas with different technologies. You would not know that if you are just an appropriator because you don't have the staff to go in and study and get into the details. But we authorize, in the Senate Armed Services Committee, because we do have that expertise.

I say the same thing is true in my other committee that I used to chair. It was the Environment and Public Works Committee. As it applies to this particular bill, the WRDA bill—we have a set of criteria and evaluated equally all these projects. There will be many projects that have been authorized that I will come on the floor and oppose vigorously when appropriations time comes. But at least we will know they have gone through a process and they meet certain criteria. That is what is important. If you take that away, that is the first line of defense, doing away with superfluous types of earmarking.

This is the only part of that system that offers discipline in the whole appropriations process. That is what this is all about. That is why the WRDA bill is so significant. Yet people who are liberal, conservatives, Democrats, Republicans who come together and realize we have an infrastructure in this country that has been sadly neglected, and we are going to have to do something about it, our opportunity will be today and I hope we can do the responsible thing and pass it.

Then, during the August recess, you are going to hear this person, who is rated the most conservative Member of this body, out talking all over the Nation why this is the conservative approach to logically authorize these projects and then determine which ones are worthwhile.

At least we know these have met a certain criteria.

Mrs. BOXER. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. INHOFE. I will yield to the Senator.

Mrs. BOXER. I am so pleased that my ranking member, Senator INHOFE, the distinguished ranking member—and was the distinguished chair of the EPW Committee—has taken to the floor to state the case.

You know, we fight so much, debate so much about so many issues, but this is one, I would say to my friend, where we have come together because we recognize that to have a great country, you have to have infrastructure that is capable, that is going to meet the needs of our people.

I would say to my friend, is it not true that even though you and I might not agree with every single project—as my friend pointed out, this is the authorizing bill, and we did have criteria here. We did work with Members. I would say to my friend, isn't it true that we were the first committee that actually followed the ethics rules that were not even law? We filled out our conflict of interest forms, we presented the bill, and this bill was 7 years in the making.

I just want to say to my friend, when he goes home and when he speaks about this, does he expect to have a good, receptive audience? I think my friend will. As I go to California, I am going to do the same thing.

Many people will call us the odd couple because we do not agree on everything. But on this one, is it not true that we see eye to eye?

Mr. INHOFE. It is. Reclaiming my time, I think you are being very generous when you say we don't always agree on every issue. In fact, there are no two people who probably disagree more. That tells you something. That tells you we have to do this. This is something this country cannot do without.

Let me give you an example. I spent several years as the mayor of a major city, Tulsa, OK. The greatest problem we had was not crime in the streets, it was not prostitution, it was unfunded mandates. Now, what we do in this is go back to some of these small communities and say: We have mandated that in your drinking water system, your wastewater system, you do these things. And we should be responsible for helping you to comply with these mandates. It is very important.

There is a group called Citizens Against Government Waste. I have right here—and I am going to submit this as part of the RECORD. For 16 years prior to right now, they have identified 76,000 projects they thought were—that fall into this category of being earmarks.

Do you know the interesting thing about this, I ask my friend from California, Senator BOXER. It is interesting that all of these projects, with very few exceptions, were not authorized.

Now, if you look at what the Congressional Research Service comes up with, around 115,000, those include the ones that were authorized. So that tells you where the problem is. The problem is not in projects that were authorized, it is in projects that are not authorized. That is why we are doing the responsible thing today. I am hoping there is no one on either side who will hold up this bill because we have to keep moving with it before the recess.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Before I get into my remarks, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma and the Senator from California for the leadership they have shown on the WRDA bill.

I couldn't agree more; infrastructure is critically important to this country. Infrastructure that revolves around our water resources may be the most important infrastructure we have. And to invest in that is truly a good investment that benefits our kids and grandkids and generations thereafter.

So thank you both for your work on this bill and, hopefully, it can be passed with a good, healthy vote coming out of this body.

WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise to share some news from my home State. I am anxiously following the wildfires burning across Montana. Over the last

few weeks, tens of thousands of acres of the Treasure State have burned. In fact, the top four fires in the West are burning in Montana. Hundreds of folks have been evacuated from their homes. Interestingly enough, today, August 3rd, is traditionally only the third day of the wildfire season. Times are changing.

This past weekend I had the opportunity to visit the front lines of two Montana wildfires, which tell two different fire policy stories. One thing they have clearly got in common: fine, hardworking men and women toughing it out in grueling conditions to protect each other and the public from harm's way. In my State, we are also relying on the hardworking folks in the Montana National Guard. As of today, about 130 guardsmen and women have been called to help fight Montana's fires. Some of these folks cancelled summer plans to answer the call to help. They are working alongside other firefighters to do dangerous, hot, dirty work to protect Montana's people and property.

To all wildland firefighters across this country, I say thank you. We owe them all respect and gratitude. We also owe them policies that will best benefit the landscape they are working so hard to protect.

The two fires I visited both started the same week, in late June. That is really early for Montana. Both are burning in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, a spectacular place where the Rocky Mountains spill onto the plains. The Ahorn fire was 15,000 acres when I visited. It is now over 40,000 acres, burning 30 miles west of the ranching and farming community of Augusta.

The Forest Service is concerned because the Ahorn fire is big and unwieldy. It is burning near a "fire exclusion" area, an area that the Forest Service has not allowed fire to burn over the years in order to protect seasonal cabins on private land east near the forest boundary. As a result of the fuels that built up over the years due to suppressing fire, the Ahorn fire is going to do pretty much what the fire wants to do. The Forest Service threw \$1 million at it when it first took off, and that "didn't make a dent," according to the fire officials. The agency says it will not be successful in controlling the perimeter of the fire, though it probably will be successful at protecting those cabins.

This has nothing to do with the agency's abilities. It has everything to do with fires that burn hotter and harder now because of a hotter climate and denser forests. To date, the Ahorn fire has cost nearly \$5 million.

Last Saturday, I also got a chance to see the Fool Creek fire. That fire was 6,200 acres when I saw it. Today it is about 22,000 acres. The Fool Creek fire is burning west of Choteau, another ranching and farming community. The Forest Service has been managing the Fool Creek fire as a "Wildland Fire Use For Resource Benefit," which means

fire bosses have been mostly allowing it to burn for the benefit of the forest. So far, it has been a lot more manageable because it is moving in and around lands that burned in 1988 and in 2000. It is still hot and dry out there and the fire made a big run yesterday, but all told, the fire has been easier to manage than Ahorn. To date, the Fool Creek fire has cost \$1.3 million. That is four times less than the cost of fighting the Ahorn fire, with similar outcomes.

It is not very popular to tell the American people that the Forest Service is letting the woods burn. But what we have learned in the last 20 years is: sometimes, it is the right thing to do.

We have another problem in my home State, and that's the holdover from longstanding fights on how to manage our forests. We will never get back to the timber harvest levels of the 1970s, nor should we. But the pendulum has swung too far, and now we are too often fighting in the courts about cutting down trees. Quite frankly, we don't have enough people working out in the woods. That is a problem economically and ecologically. Throw in climate change, thousands of acres of dead, dry beetle-infested trees, and lots of new houses popping up on the edges of our national forests, and we have a perfect storm brewing.

I don't think it is a coincidence that, with all the fuel buildup in our forests and the hottest summer on record, we're in the middle of a whopper of a fire season. Climatologists tell me that this is becoming the new norm. This is what we can continue to expect. Which means we have to get even smarter about when to fight wildfire, and where, and how best to stretch every dollar spent on battling them. And we have to get serious about supporting the Forest Service as it reduces fuels in the forests.

With the Forest Service spending 45 percent of its budget on fire suppression, it barely has the time or the resources to restore our forests to health. With firefighting costs predicted to go even higher, creating a trust fund for fire management makes a great deal of sense to me. It is something we have to do in order to ensure that funds will be available to do the work of restoring health to our forests. Because when we restore our forests, we will make them more resilient to fire. This is something we have to do, and we have to do it fast, especially around our Western towns and communities.

This issue won't go away when fire season comes to an end. The conversation will continue with my colleagues here in Washington and with all folks in Montana. We'll be talking about fire and forest health and the opportunities they provide us. They are connected, and they are connected to Montana's well-being and economy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, while the Senator from Montana is still on the Senate floor, let me, first of all, thank