

has just been announced that the deficit is the largest we have ever seen as a country.

The investments in this highway trust fund make our transportation safe. It is not just roads, it is mass-transit projects that are so important to this country. As I told the distinguished ranking member of the Budget Committee who was here objecting yesterday, maybe two or three decades ago, my being from Nevada, I may not have been concerned about mass transit, but we are now. Las Vegas is a metropolitan area with traffic congestion. We have to do something with mass transit. It cannot be handled on the highways.

With this new urgency in mind, the Bush administration joined us in calling for a transfer of these funds immediately. I received a call from the Secretary of Transportation saying this needs to be done. I said: Why didn't you help us before? Basically, the Bush-McCain crew was just hoping they could squeeze through before the new President is elected before anything would happen. But even this President has acknowledged that we have to do something.

Democrats and Republicans in the House, I repeat, have already voted to have this money transferred, and they did it last July. We want to follow suit. Yet some in the President's own party continue to refuse this economically vital legislation that is so important.

We have had 92 filibusters led by the Republicans so far. I am not sure if we counted the last one. Anyway, we will say 92. I have expressed many times my disappointment about the Republicans blocking legislation supported by a majority of Senators—a majority of Senators. They have blocked legislation not only that we Democrats support but a majority of Senators, Democrats and Republicans.

Here we have an interesting thing now. This is new. Republicans are blocking a bill supported by an overwhelming majority of both parties in the House and in the Senate and supported by the President of their own party. They are even blocking that. They are doing everything within their power to maintain the status quo. Yesterday, Republicans prevented us from passing this bill. It is so important that it be done. I have trouble understanding why the Republicans are objecting to a bill that Democrats and Republicans in the House support, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate support, and the President supports. They are objecting to their own best interests, it seems to me. But that is what they are doing. I think we should send this bill to the President's desk, as the President has requested.

The people who are objecting are using all kinds of excuses. Yesterday, they said they had a few amendments. Tonight, I guess they have a few more amendments. They think it is really not right to take the money to replenish the highway trust fund from the

general fund, but they haven't objected to almost spending a trillion dollars of borrowed money going to Iraq. They haven't objected to taking tens of billions of dollars from the general fund to give tax breaks to big oil companies. That didn't seem to bother them. But when it comes to \$8 billion to maintain our highways and our mass-transit projects that create jobs at a time when we have about 10 million Americans out of work, they are even blocking that. This legislation is prudent and necessary. It is a prudent and necessary investment in the economic well-being of our struggling Nation. I hope our Republican colleagues answer the call of President Bush and Secretary Chertoff. Judge Chertoff said the lack of investment in U.S. infrastructure is "kind of like playing Russian roulette with our citizens' safety." That is what President Bush's Secretary of Homeland Security has said. So this is no time for games such as that.

So, Mr. President, here is my unanimous consent request: That the Finance Committee be discharged from its consideration of H.R. 6532 and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that the amendment at the desk be considered agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements relating to this matter be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD, with no intervening action or debate.

But we don't have a Republican here to object, and so I am not going to take advantage of their not being here. But I hope the American people see what is going on. It is another day gone by with our not having the ability here because of the Republicans refusing to approve legislation that is extremely urgent. It is emergency legislation. We have been told so by the President and his Secretary of Treasury, and they still would not let us do this.

I wonder where JOHN MCCAIN is. What is his idea on this? Should we let the fund go belly up? Where is JOHN MCCAIN? Couldn't he send a statement, a message from somebody saying: I agree with President Bush, or does he disagree, for one of the rare, 10 percent of the times when he disagrees? The word out is he supports the President 90 percent of the time. It is really 95 percent of the time.

But is he now going to be part of the 5 percent where he says: I disagree with the President; I don't think that money should be replenished.

Where is JOHN MCCAIN? Let us hear from JOHN MCCAIN.

TRIBUTE TO LAURA SANDERS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable teacher from my home State of Kentucky, Laura Sanders, who was recognized on August 19 as Kentucky's 2008 No Child Left Behind American Star of Teaching.

Sanders, a kindergarten teacher at Cumberland Trace Elementary School in Bowling Green, KY, has based her teaching career on the belief that all children can achieve and holds high expectations for each and every one of them.

She looks at each child's strengths and weaknesses and works with them individually or in small groups to ensure their success. She is the recipient of numerous awards recognizing her contributions to education.

For the 2006-2007 school year, her students' reading scores went from the 52 percent benchmark in the fall to 91 percent in the spring. For the 2007-2008 school year, her kindergarteners started with a 58 percent benchmark and by mid-year, 85 percent had met the benchmark scores.

However, it is her love of teaching, and the love she has for her students, that defines her effective and creative teaching style that gives students a willingness to learn.

"Love. Love the children that come in your door every day," Sanders advises other educators.

Patrice McCrary, who has been a colleague and friend of Sanders for over a decade, nominated Sanders for this year's award.

"I've had the honor and privilege of team teaching with her. This is our 11th year together, and I have never seen anybody who puts more into their teaching or loves their students more than Ms. Sanders does," McCrary said.

Each year since 2004, teachers across all grade levels and disciplines are honored in the fall as American Stars of Teaching based on their success in improving academic performance and making a difference in their students' lives.

Margaret Spellings, the Secretary of Education, acknowledged the outstanding teaching style that Sanders brings to her students.

"Teachers like Laura Sanders combine a passion for teaching with high expectations that every child can learn," Spellings said. "We at the U.S. Department of Education are proud to recognize these dedicated, hard-working professionals, who are committed to closing the achievement gap and challenging every child to achieve his or her potential."

Her former students are walking examples of her success and her passion for teaching. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing Laura Sanders's unwavering dedication to education, her community, and Kentucky.

EXPANSION OF THE VERDE VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I am pleased to relate some good news from my State of Arizona. It is good news for Arizonans who live in the Verde Valley, which lies between Phoenix and Flagstaff.