

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET.) The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, how much time remains in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In the first segment of the time, 4½ minutes remains.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

#### NASA FUNDING

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, this afternoon I am chairing a hearing of our Science and Space Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee on the future of NASA. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is at a crossroads. There is only one person who can lead America's space program, and that is the President. The direction our country's space program, both manned and unmanned, is going to take will be square in the lap of the President. I discussed this with him on several occasions when he was Senator and when he was a candidate. I have discussed it with his staff, I am sure from their standpoint, ad infinitum.

This afternoon, we have the Chairman of the blue ribbon panel created by the President to look at the future of human spaceflight for America and to report to the President. The Chairman, former aerospace CEO Norman Augustine, is testifying in front of our committee.

It is the contention of this Senator's, who loves the space program, both manned and unmanned, and wants to see it continue as a part of our American character as explorers and adventurers, that if we ever give it up, we become a second-rate power because we give up a part of ourselves. We have always been pioneers, adventurers, and explorers. We used to go westward when this country was discovered and built. Now we go upward. Clearly, it is no secret where this Senator comes from.

What I would like to get Dr. Augustine to bring forth, out of this extensive deliberation and extensive and detailed and very good report he has come forth with, is just how important it is that you can't do a human space program on the cheap and that NASA has been underfunded for the last decade. We see the results, that we are going to be shutting down the space shuttle in the near future when we have completed construction of the international space station. And because NASA has been underfunded, we don't have the next rocket ready. We have to go and hire rides to our own

space station that we have bought and paid for and built. We have to buy rides from the Russians to get there. That is inexcusable, but that is what happened. It happened over the last decade. NASA was underfunded.

The Augustine Commission has come out in early reports—and I want to hear this directly from him, I want the committee to hear this directly from Dr. Augustine—indicating that if we are going to fund a human spaceflight program that gets us out of low Earth orbit where our space station is and allows us to explore other worlds, be it the Moon, be it Mars, be it asteroids, whatever it is, NASA needs an additional \$3 billion a year for the next decade. I want to hear Dr. Augustine say that, in fact, we do need to get out of low Earth orbit, because that is what we need to do as discoverers, as adventurers.

Finally, I want to hear him say that because NASA has been underfunded and mismanaged, in fact, we have a huge personnel problem in that suddenly there is not going to be work for that personnel. Those people who are space pioneers, who have lived it and breathed it and dedicated their lives to it, need to be taken into consideration instead of summarily dismissed and laid off. That is what I am looking to.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COBURN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wish to spend a few minutes this morning on some amendments I have offered. I ask unanimous consent to withdraw amendment 2373.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business and the measure is not pending at this time.

Mr. COBURN. Will the Chair advise when we will be out of morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. At 11 o'clock.

#### TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I will spend some time discussing the amendments we have. There is some opposition to our amendment to allow the States to opt out of being required to fund transportation enhancements. This does not eliminate the enhancements. What it simply does is give the State of Colorado or the State of Oklahoma the opportunity to say, with roads in such disrepair and 138,000 bridges in disrepair, that we have the ability, if we so choose, to take all of the money, instead of 90 percent, and apply it to solve the problems we have.

So it will not force California to not do enhancements. It will not force any

State to not do them. It will give them the privilege of electing whether they want to do those enhancements when, in fact, we have such a critical need in terms of roads, highways, and bridges.

So the goal of this—and it is important to know where the money comes from. The money is taxes that are collected from individuals in Colorado and Oklahoma and every other State that are then sent here and then sent back. In my State—I do not know about Colorado—we have never gotten more than 93 percent of what we have sent here. We used to average about 74 percent. But now, as to the money that does come back, 10 percent has to be spent on enhancements, whether that is sound barriers or walking paths or bicycle paths or numerous other enhancements, as under the SAFETEA-LU bill.

So what this amendment does, it does not force anybody to not, but it gives them the option to fix the problems in their State.

I would note that the National Transportation Safety Board notified us that last year 13,000 people died on our highways, not because they made a driving error, not because someone else made a driving error, not because they had a problem with their automobile or with their truck, they had the accident because the roads were substandard. Thirteen thousand people lost their lives.

So the question of priority, of whether my department of transportation in Oklahoma ought to have the ability to fix roads and bridges instead of building sound barriers ought to be left to us.

This amendment is for this year only. It does not eliminate, does not change the law. It just says: We are going to give you the option this year with this money, if your State has needs—and Oklahoma has significant needs; I know Colorado does because I am there a lot—that we do not necessarily spend it on sound barriers, that we can actually spend it on something that is going to save somebody's life. So it does not force anybody to not do enhancements but gives them the right to choose the priority of saving lives over enhancements, if they so desire.

The Senator from California made a statement yesterday about what this amendment would do. There is no force in this amendment other than to allow. It allows the States the freedom to do what is best for their citizens rather than saying 10 percent of the money they get back has to be spent on things that are not going to save lives, are not going to enhance safety, but, in fact, are going to enhance aesthetics.

So I think it is a commonsense amendment. There is no force; that if California wants to continue to spend 10 percent of their money on enhancements, they can. There will be nothing that will keep them from doing that. It will be what the State decides to do rather than what we decide to do.