

have had bipartisan Democrats and Republicans working together and pleading with the President and the White House, starting with Simpson-Bowles, which was a bipartisan effort. The Gang of 6, the Committee of 12, the supercommittee were all bipartisan efforts.

I was part of the dinner group, which was an effort to plead with the President to do something together to address this problem and being turned down time after time after time. Now we are sailing toward the end of this Presidency, and obviously nothing is going to be done even though the Social Security trust fund is going to expire on the President's watch. They will come up with some gimmick and shift some money around and so forth, thereby just putting us further in debt and kicking the can down the road. They have to cover this because politically they will not allow this to happen, but they will do it in a way that makes our situation even worse.

As the President careens toward retirement and his legacy, one of those legacies will be questioned by people for years and years into the future: Why didn't we do something when we had the chance on a bipartisan basis with support from both parties? Why was the President so adamant about not doing anything to address this problem?

Time is running out. Social Security disability will collapse under the President's leadership before he escapes at the end of 2016. You can tell how frustrated I am, but I will keep coming down here and talking about this stuff and hopefully—well, we don't want it to happen under a crisis. We don't want to be days away from bankruptcy, so we move some money around in the Federal budget and so forth and so on, take it from Peter to pay Paul, put us further in debt, and then kick the can down the road.

I feel for the next President, whoever that might be. They are going to get a can of worms because we didn't do anything about this during this tenure.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015— MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermonters—like many Americans—are frustrated. They are frustrated when they see short-term patches that do not make investments in our crumbling infrastructure. They are frustrated with seeing meaningful policy advance, while Congress bickers over how to pay for it—and at what expense to other critical programs.

Passing a long-term authorization to make needed improvements to our aging roads and bridges is a matter of common sense. It is a matter of safety. And quite frankly, for us in Congress, it's our job.

After 11 short-term extensions over the course of 3 years, Congress finally approved MAP-21 in 2012. Now, two short-term extensions later and faced with another expiration deadline, we have a choice: another patch, or pass a meaningful, long-term transportation authorization that will give our States the ability to build and repair roads, bridges, and byways, to promote rail safety and transit, and to invest in the critical infrastructure that supports our cities and towns, enables interstate and intrastate commerce, and creates jobs for American workers. The time to pass a plan for long-term transportation funding is now.

Vermonters take great pride in our historic downtowns and small communities. In our cities and towns, we have a culture of getting things done. We find a way to accomplish our shared goals. But, when those shared goals rely largely on a Federal funding stream that is unreliable at best, and uncertain at worst, it makes it impossible to double down on the investments needed to keep the cars, buses, and trucks moving on our roads. We can invest in bridges and roads overseas. We do it all the time. We decided to spend a couple of trillion dollars in Iraq. We didn't use any offsets; we just put it on the credit card. As one Vermonter said to me back home: We spend billions upon billions of dollars to build roads and bridges over there, and then they blow them up. Why don't we spend a little bit of that money here at home, and we will take care of those roads and bridges?

As much as we invest in bridges and roads overseas, we must do so right here at home. Look at this bridge show in this picture I have in the Chamber. It is located in East Montpelier, just about 5 miles from where I was born. It was built in 1936—the year my parents were married. It is in dire need of repair. Weather, the sometimes very harsh Vermont climate, age, and traffic volume—more than 4,400 vehicles cross it per day, 10 percent of which are trucks—have led to the deterioration of the bridge. It is one of nearly 300 long and short bridges in Vermont that have been deemed structurally deficient. The East Montpelier Bridge re-

mains open—at least for now. It will be replaced in 2018, with a price tag of \$7.3 million, about 2 minutes' worth of the money we wasted in Iraq. It is an issue of safety. It is an issue of economic certainty. It is a commonsense investment that has been delayed for too long because resources are far too scarce. I am willing to bet the same could be said of all 50 States represented in this body.

We all agree that a long-term transportation bill means safe bridges, paved roads, and completed railroads. But it also encourages innovative projects that incorporate public health, environmental, and social incentives. Look no further than Burlington, VT. A picturesque town nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain, it is home to a variety of innovative entrepreneurs and businesses, from high-tech hubs to specialty food producers. As our businesses and communities grow, Vermonters depend on safe and reliable modes of transportation to keep them connected.

Church Street is a pedestrian-only street that welcomes locals and visitors to enjoy the many vibrant shops and restaurants. As businesses begin to sprawl beyond the limits of Church Street and settle into new homes along Pine Street, the city has invested in safe modes of travel to ensure accessibility. The Bike Path Rehabilitation Project and the Safe Streets Collaborative are projects that consider the needs of the community as a whole—either in a vehicle, on foot, or pedaling.

Main Street—the heart of any Vermont downtown—is home to small businesses and services such as post offices, grocery stores, medical offices, and banks. In a rural State such as Vermont, investing in our infrastructure extends beyond bridges and roads. It is sidewalk repair. It is establishing crosswalks. It is widening roads to provide for parking, and it is installing such basic things as street lighting, refuse receptacles and landscaping.

After many years of economic decline in downtown Barre—one of our larger cities—the city's Main Street was left with empty storefronts and lonely streets. The community introduced the Big Dig—a multiyear effort to revitalize Main Street and City Hall Park. With funding sourced from Downtown Transportation Grants and Federal funding sourced through the Agency of Transportation, 200 State employees were able to relocate into a new office building in the heart of downtown.

Look at the before and after pictures. The differences are stark. These are the kinds of Federal investments, coupled with investments from States and towns, that can revitalize communities across the country. This project brought life back into Main Street. Businesses filled vacant office spaces, restaurants opened their doors, and the sidewalks welcomed locals and visitors alike. The transportation funding went beyond just improving the physical infrastructure; it was an investment in