

bank; it weakens fiscal discipline, and I would point out that repurposing the Federal Reserve's capital surplus doesn't actually create any new money for the federal government.

That is not the only funding gimmick found in this legislation. It also purports to raise \$6.2 billion in revenue for transportation and infrastructure projects by selling oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Let's leave aside for a second that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was never intended to be a piggy bank for congressional appropriators. What makes this pay-for particularly objectionable is that its authors assume they can get \$93 for a barrel of oil when it is currently selling for less than \$40 per barrel. Only in Washington could we come to love a provision like this. Only in Washington could we come to accept a provision like this as somehow acceptable. If we are going to start selling Federal assets at fantasy prices—prices that do not exist and will not exist in any universe for the foreseeable future—there is absolutely no limit whatsoever to the number of things that we can pretend to pay for. But that is what we will be doing—pretending to pay.

As bad as this bill's funding schemes are, the cynical process used to secure votes in its favor might well be far more troubling. For instance, this bill adds back \$3.5 billion in crop subsidy spending that we just cut last month in the budget deal.

Is this really how we do business in the Senate? We reduce spending one month in order to appear fiscally responsible only to reverse course the very next month when we think no one is looking? You don't need to oppose crop subsidies to see the dishonesty and cynicism of this particular maneuver.

Even worse, this bill would never have had a chance of passing the Senate were it not for a deal to include the renewal of the Export-Import Bank as part of this legislation. I have spoken out against the Export-Import Bank many times before, so there is little need to revisit the mountain of evidence proving that it is one of the most egregious, indefensible cases of crony capitalism in Washington, DC. But it is worth highlighting some of the so-called reforms that Ex-Im supporters included in the bill.

First, there is the new Office of Ethics created within the Export-Import Bank. Presumably, this is supposed to help the Bank's management reduce the rate at which Ex-Im employees and beneficiaries are indicted for fraud, bribery, and other wrongdoing. Since 2009, there have been 85 such indictments, or about 14 per year.

The bill also creates a new position called the Chief Risk Officer and requires the Bank to go through an independent audit of its portfolio. Only in Washington will you find people who believe that an organization's systemic ethical failings can somehow be over-

come by creating a new ethics bureaucracy or that hiring a new risk management bureaucrat is a suitable replacement for market discipline or that giving another multimillion-dollar contract to a well-connected accounting firm will somehow substitute for real, actual political accountability.

None of these bogus reforms will make an ounce of difference. None of them will change the essential purpose of the Export-Import Bank, which is to use taxpayer money to subsidize wealthy, politically connected businesses.

Finally, it must be stressed that this bill does nothing to fix our fundamentally broken highway financing system. After this legislation is enacted, the highway trust fund will spend more money than the Federal gasoline tax brings in. And after this series of fraudulent pay-fors are exhausted in just 5 years, we will be right back to where we have been for the last decade, and that is trying to find enough money for another bailout without attracting too much attention from the American people.

Let's not forget that the States are big losers under the status quo system too—under the current system that we have. Federal bureaucrats divert at least 25 percent of State gasoline dollars to nonhighway projects, including mass transit, bike paths, and other boondoggles such as vegetation management, whatever that is.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield? I have a favor to ask. I will give the Senator from Utah all the time in the world, but he originally asked to speak for 5 minutes. I plan to respond to the issues he is talking about, which I don't happen to agree with, but I wonder if the Senator from Utah will allow his colleagues to speak in the order we agreed to and then come back and allow the Senator from Utah to finish his remarks.

I ask the Senator through the Chair if that will work?

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I have less than a page of my remarks that I prepared left.

I ask unanimous consent for permission to have an additional 2 minutes to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEE. As I was saying, Federal bureaucrats divert at least 25 percent of State gas tax dollars to nonhighway projects, including mass transit, bike paths, and other boondoggles such as vegetation management. Federal Davis-Bacon price-fixing regulations then artificially inflate construction costs by at least 10 percent, and Federal environmental regulations, such as those issued under the National Environmental Policy Act, add an average of 6.1 years in planning delays to any federally funded project.

I understand that Washington is not ready for a more conservative approach to infrastructure funding—at least not

yet—one where States get to keep their transportation dollars and decide how and on what they will spend those dollars, free from interference by Federal regulators.

We can have honest disagreements from policy, and I know there is more work to do in making the case for conservative transportation reform, but what I refuse to accept is the toxic process that produced this bill—the backroom deals, the about-face on crop subsidies, and the Export-Import Bank. The American people deserve better than this, and I won't stop fighting to ensure that we do better than this in the future.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for letting me interrupt at this time. We passed a bill earlier, and normally I would have spoken after final passage, but I didn't want to hold people up who had transportation plans, so I reserved my comments until later. I appreciate this opportunity to speak at this time.

I congratulate the Senator from Oklahoma and the Senator from California for the significant highway bill they passed tonight. I know there was a lot of work that went into that and a lot of good things will come out of it. It will make a difference for the economy in the United States.

As chairman of the Budget Committee, I know if we can get the private sector to increase by just 1 percent, we bring in \$400 billion more in revenue without raising taxes, and raising the economy by 1 percent in the private sector is significant.

#### RESTORING AMERICANS' HEALTHCARE FREEDOM RECONCILIATION BILL

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, today we also passed the most comprehensive and far-reaching repeal of ObamaCare that is possible under the reconciliation rules. We expect the House to pass this version shortly and soon this repeal will head to the President's desk for the first time in his tenure.

Our bill will eliminate more than \$1.2 trillion in ObamaCare tax hikes and save nearly \$400 billion over 10 years. Lifting the burdens this law has placed on hard-working families will help move the Nation forward from ObamaCare's broken promises to better access to patient-centered health care for each and every American.

As I noted earlier, our Nation has made great strides in improving the quality of life for all Americans, but these changes were always forged in the spirit of bipartisan compromise and cooperation. We still need health care reform, but it has to be done the right way. To have good health care, we will have to have ideas from both parties, not just one party.

Tonight we made significant progress to pointing out a bunch of the flaws,

and there were a lot of people who were involved in that and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them.

We gave instructions to the Finance Committee and the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee that they were each to save \$1 billion. So Senator HATCH and his staff went to work on it, and Senator ALEXANDER and his staff went to work on it, and they accomplished that task in conjunction with the House. So I thank them for their effort.

I thank the Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee, and especially my staff director, Eric Ueland; as well as my deputy staff director, Dan Kowalski; the parliamentarian, Tori Gorman; the senior budget analyst, Steve Robinson; the budget analysts, Greg D'Angelo and Tom Borck; the junior budget analyst, Kaitlin Vogt; the chief counsel, George Everly; the assistant counsel, Clint Brown; the director of regulatory review, Susan Eckerly; and the editor, Elizabeth Keys.

I also wish to thank the people on my personal staff who had to put some of their projects kind of secondary at times and then had to pitch in and help with the budget as well.

I also want to express my appreciation to the staff from Leader MCCONNELL's office. Leader MCCONNELL is a tremendous strategist and has opened the process for the Senate so that great things like the highway bill can be done, and that is done by allowing committees to do amendments, and then allowing the committee bill to come to the floor and have amendments from both sides of the aisle in an open process, and then to go to conference committee and have the conference committee do their work to make sure that the House and the Senate are together. Some of the chief people who worked on that are the chief of staff, Sharon Soderstrom; his policy advisor, Scott Raab; his budget and appropriations policy advisor, Jon Burks; and his policy director, Hazen Marshall. In addition, our floor and cloakroom staff has been very helpful, led by Laura Dove and Robert Duncan.

Senator CORNYN and his staff did a marvelous job of helping to find out what difficulties there were and what things needed to be corrected. Senator THUNE did a great job of lining up speakers, and Senator BARRASSO did a great job with his staff in lining up some of the messaging.

Thanks are due to the Senate Finance Committee, including the staff director, Chris Campbell; the chief health counsel and policy director, Jay Khosla; and the health policy advisor, Katie Simeon; the tax counsel, Preston Rutledge; and the health policy advisor, Becky Shipp.

I extend my gratitude to the staff of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, as well as Senator ALEXANDER, who has done a marvelous job there. I thank his staff director, David Cleary, his deputy staff director,

Lindsey Seidman, his senior policy adviser and health council, Liz Wroe, and his health policy director, Mary Sumpter Lapinski.

I also need to thank the former budget staff people who lent their expertise on this, particularly Bill Hoagland.

We are in a process that may help with some of the future accounting for projects and things and that is to do some budget reform. A lot of people have talked about budgeting reform and we have been doing some hearings on budget reform. We will be putting together a bill, and to make it a bipartisan bill it will have to go into effect in 2017. At that point nobody will know who will be in the majority, so we will all work to have a process that will be fair to both sides just in case we happen to be in the minority or the other side happens to be in the minority.

So we have a lot of people on both sides who have been working on that issue, and we will hold a number of hearings yet and hopefully come up with a process where we can get rid of old programs, eliminate duplication, and make the programs that we have be far better. Some of the people who have worked on that in the past have been Senator Domenici, who was the chairman of the committee; Senator Gregg, who was the chairman of the committee; and Senator PATTY MURRAY, who was the chairman of the Budget Committee. One of the early ones, Senator Phil Gramm, has donated some of his time to come and work with both sides to take a look at what some of the future economic problems are, and he is also one of the foremost economic predictors, so we can make sure all of those things will come together as we work on future budgets.

Of course, I would be grossly in error if I didn't mention the House chairman of the Budget Committee, TOM PRICE. He and I have been meeting at least once a week with our staffs and coordinating what is being done on both sides, both from a process standpoint, from a policy standpoint, from a bill standpoint, and from a budget standpoint. I think that paid off in what we are seeing tonight.

Last and particularly not least, I need to thank the Parliamentarians. I need to thank Elizabeth MacDonough, Leigh Hildebrand, Michael Beaver, Thomas Cuffie. These are some unsung heroes of the U.S. Senate who do a bipartisan—a nonpartisan job for us of kind of refereeing when asked, and when you are doing a reconciliation bill, you are forced to ask. I had no idea what the process was and the difficulty and the time that is involved, but all of that was spent by the Parliamentarians.

We are all familiar with the rule book that is in every one of these desks and about this thick. That is a small part of it. In their office, they have file cabinets full of precedents. If you are drafting a bill that has to meet the kind of rules and the tight constraints

that a reconciliation bill has, they have to meet with you on a regular basis and give their opinion and review all of these precedents to see if it can be put together the way we think it ought to be put together to be sure that when it comes to the floor, it can be voted on and when it is done, it actually is a bill that will be possible to send to the President's desk.

So I thank the Parliamentarians for presiding. I know the tremendous job they do of advising whoever sits in the Presiding Officer's chair, but this was a whole new level of instruction as I found out all of the things that they have to have as a part of their knowledge, and I really appreciate the effort they go to, the knowledge they already have, and the important role they play in this process.

I know I left out a lot of people, but to anybody who participated, I want to thank them for their efforts and hope that out of all of these budget processes, what we come up with is a better America.

I yield the floor, and I thank the chairman.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Oklahoma.

**MR. INHOFE.** Mr. President, let me first of all thank the Senator from Wyoming. It is interesting that every time we are involved in something—it could be reconciliation, the budget or the highway bill—he is always in the center and he has always been the anchor that holds us all together, and we appreciate that so much.

I will recognize the Senator from Washington, Ms. CANTWELL.

#### TRANSPORTATION BILL

**MS. CANTWELL.** Mr. President, I rise tonight to thank my colleagues who worked so hard on this transportation package that we have just voted on. I thank Chairman INHOFE and Senator BOXER for their hard work, as well as Chairman THUNE and Senator NELSON from the commerce committee for their hard work.

The last thing I would have predicted at the beginning of this year is that Senator BOXER would have joined forces with Senator MCCONNELL to force through a transportation package that many of us probably thought wasn't even a reality. I would like to thank the Senator from California because I think there are times in everybody's career where you have to decide that you are going to stand up and push forward no matter how many arrows are shot in your back or no matter how many questions people ask. You have a vision of a path that you see and you realize that at the end, you think you can produce a package that will really be good for America.

That is what Senator BOXER has done. She has produced a package that will not only be a great legacy for an already great career but will be the very anecdote we need right now to an economy that is greatly challenged by a lack of infrastructure investment.