

The Ripoon Forum

February 2015
Volume 49, No. 1

RENEE ELLMERS ON THE GOP:
"I'd like to see us be more proactive
and results-oriented."



The BRIDGEBUILDER

**Bill Shuster discusses why the road to repairing America's
aging infrastructure runs across the political divide**

Plus: "Restoring Trust in the Highway Trust Fund," by David Vitter

And: "It's Worse Than You Think," by Ray LaHood



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since 1965."*

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In this Edition

On Feb. 22, 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appeared before a Joint Session of Congress and laid out his vision to build America's interstate highway system.

"The highway system is a public enterprise," he stated matter of factly. "As the owner and operator, the various levels of Government have a responsibility for management that promotes the economy of the nation and properly serves the individual user."

Sixty years later, the system that Eisenhower built stands in a state of disrepair. Roads are unsafe. Bridges are crumbling. And the Highway Trust Fund that was intended to pay for new construction is instead hemorrhaging money and in need of a new, long-term infusion of cash.

In response to this crisis, Congress and the President have punted. Twenty seven times over the past five years, they have passed short-term funding bills that have slowed the deterioration of our aging infrastructure but have done nothing to rebuild it or keep it from getting worse. The last of these short-term measures was approved last summer and expires in May.

With the clock ticking and funds running out, this latest edition of THE RIPON FORUM looks at the prospects that Congress will be able to reach agreement on a long-term spending plan before the deadline is reached. We do so by talking with and hearing from a collection of leaders and experts who are helping to drive the debate.

Leading our coverage is an interview with Bill Shuster, the Chairman of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. Shuster's job is to steer the bill through the House. Both literally and politically, Shuster is a bridgebuilder – someone who understands that the road to repairing America's aging infrastructure runs across the partisan divide. In our interview, he talks about the effort he is leading to reach a bipartisan compromise, and the importance of taking action this year.

We also hear from Senator David Vitter, who Chairs the Subcommittee on Environment and Public Works and shares Shuster's sense of urgency about the importance of reaching agreement on a long-term plan. "While short-term fixes have allowed the trust fund to continue operating," the Louisiana lawmaker writes, "taxpayers continue to drive on deteriorating roads and bridges wondering where their taxpayer dollars have gone."

This viewpoint is echoed by Ray LaHood. In an essay for the FORUM, the former Congressman and Transportation Secretary writes about the "deplorable state" of America's infrastructure and what it is costing American taxpayers each year. "Because 32 percent of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition," he pens, "taxpayers are paying on average \$444 each year in additional vehicle repairs and operating costs ... And because 44 percent of America's major urban highways are congested, drivers are paying \$121 billion in wasted time and fuel."

This edition of the FORUM also looks at the possibility of adopting a mileage-based user fee as a new source of revenue for the Highway Trust Fund. Adrian Moore of the Reason Foundation argues it is something that should be seriously considered, while Gary Biller with the National Motorists Association argues that the costs may be too high. And, in two other insightful essays, Jonathan Gifford of George Mason University examines the growing importance of Public-Private Partnerships, and Joshua Schank of the Eno Center for Transportation examines our nation's transportation priorities and concludes that they need to be changed.

As always, we hope you find this edition of THE RIPON FORUM informative and interesting, and encourage you to contact us with any comments or questions you may have.

Lou Zickar
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The Impact of Global Youth Populations on U.S. Foreign Policy

THOMAS E. GARRETT

The world is becoming a younger place, at least in terms of population. In America, it is common to hear political leaders speak positively of the country's youth as a national asset. A young population can be a great opportunity for society, as a source of economic growth and innovation. But in the world's least developed countries, where the numbers of people ages 15 to 29 years old are growing at the most rapid rate, the unmet needs of young people are producing negative impacts beyond the borders of their countries. As Washington grapples with issues ranging from trade barriers, homeland security and the threat posed by al Qaeda and ISIS, understanding the implications of the world's youth demographic is essential.

The World Bank estimates that youth comprise 44 percent of the world's 7.2 billion people. This so-called "youth bulge" exists primarily in the least developed countries; on the African continent, 40 percent of the population is under the age of 15 and 70 percent is under the age of 30 years old. In its 2012 report, *African Youth: Fulfilling the Potential*, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation found that while the average age of an African is 19, the average age of an African leader is 62.

The youth bulge has already begun to impact U.S. foreign policy. As trade talks led by Washington attempt to erase barriers in Asia, the need of governments in that region to seek job protection demanded by their growing youth population will be a factor in the negotiations. Young Ukrainians, long viewed as apathetic, staged weeks of demonstrations which led to the ouster of Moscow's ally, President

Viktor Yanukovich, after he ended talks in late 2013 for Ukraine's membership in the European Union. In 2015, Washington and NATO face serious challenges from Vladimir Putin in part as a result of his response to the changes initiated by young people in Kyiv.

Probably no region presents such stark examples of the impact of growing youth numbers than North Africa and the Middle East. Here, the increase in the youth demographic is compounded by the traditional social strictures of the region. Young people typically remain in their parents' homes until marriage, and marriage isn't likely without the money which comes from gainful employment. Under- and un-employed young people in increasing numbers find little opportunity provided by the governments of North Africa and the Middle East and know, through social media, they are being denied basic opportunity afforded their peers in developed parts of the world.

The 2011 Arab Spring was largely led by young people who sought dignity and hope as they overthrew authoritarian rulers who had governed unchallenged for decades. The chain of events caught Washington off guard: after ruling for three decades, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was ousted by the "Facebook generation" in 18 days of protests and Tunisia's Ben Ali fled the country after one month of protests started by a single young man trapped in a dead-end job who took his life in desperation. Unquestionably both Mubarak and Ben Ali were non-democratic leaders who looted their country's coffers and violated human rights with impunity. But both men, whose countries were U.S. allies in the post-



Thomas E. Garrett

As Washington grapples with issues ranging from trade barriers, homeland security and the threat posed by al Qaeda and ISIS, understanding the implications of the world's youth demographic is essential.

9/11 War on Terror, were abruptly replaced by failing to meet youth demands. America's longtime partner in Egypt went on to an Islamist government overthrown now by military coup.

The outcome in Tunisia is somewhat more hopeful but remains fragile - the elections held in 2014 met international standards but with each of the three elections (parliamentary, then presidential and a presidential runoff), youth participation steadily declined as political leaders failed to outline jobs and education platforms. The fact that one presidential candidate was 88 years of age (and the eventual winner) and his opponent was 79 also failed to inspire young people. A failure of the political process to engage the largest demographic in the Middle East leaves a void which extremism seeks to fill. The ages of 17 to 25 are often referred to as the "fighting age" and, today, Tunisia has more young people than any other country, estimated at 3,000, in the conflict on the side of ISIS

The ages of 17 to 25 are often referred to as the "fighting age" and, today, Tunisia has more young people than any other country, estimated at 3000, in the conflict on the side of ISIS in Syria.

in Syria. Where they go from ISIS is an important security question for Tunisia and the West.

Given that the youth bulge in the world's population will continue at least another decade, Washington needs to understand this key demographic and factor its impacts into planning. If Washington wants to move proactively, education reform and improving vocational education are areas where the United States has positive lessons to share, possibly through the development and exchange programs of the State Department. And America needs to encourage the leaders of the least developed countries to engage their youth – failure to do so could turn an opportunity for reform and economic growth into a globally destabilizing force.

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Thomas E. Garrett serves as Vice President for Programs for the International Republican Institute.



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The Ripon Forum: *The First 50 Years*

"In publishing this magazine, The Ripon Society seeks to provide a forum for fresh ideas, well-researched proposals, and for a spirit of criticism, innovation, and independent thinking within the Republican Party."

ON OUR MASTHEAD SINCE 1965

LOU ZICKAR

The first edition of THE RIPON FORUM was published 50 years ago this past January. To mark the occasion, we thought it would be a good time to look back over the last half-century at some of the individuals and ideas that have been featured in our pages. It's an impressive list.

In May 1968, Richard Nixon wrote an essay for the FORUM in which he talked about the importance of job creation and called for the establishment of an online job bank 30 years before Monster.com. "I propose that we use existing computer technology to match the unemployed with available jobs," the then-Presidential candidate presciently wrote.

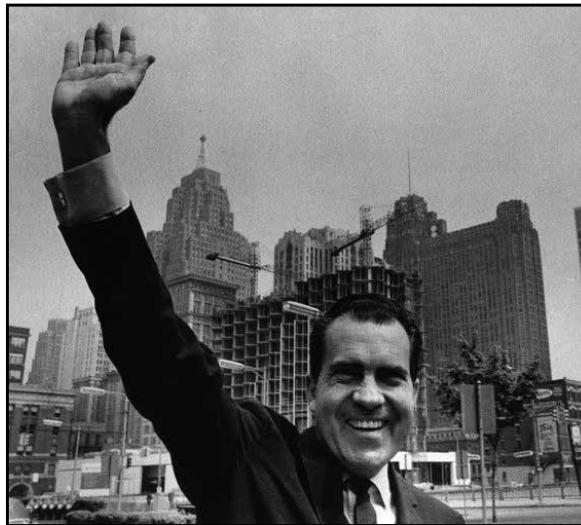
Thirty-two years later, one of Nixon's successors in the Oval Office gave an interview to the FORUM in which he foresaw one of the main global security challenges facing the U.S. today. "Third World radicalism remains a serious problem," President George H.W. Bush said in September 1990. "The Middle East promises to be a region of turmoil in the coming decade. The West needs to defend its interests and values against aggression; it needs to stand by its friends in the region who are resisting such forces."

Presidents aren't the only leaders who have been featured in our pages over the years. The FORUM has also featured leaders from other fields as well. In October 1985, for example, the FORUM published an interview with

legendary energy executive T. Boone Pickens in which he not only shared his secrets for success in business, but explained why he believed that government should be run like a business, too. "Taxpayers are like stockholders," the oilman told our journal. "Both are entitled to a full day's work for a full day's pay. For a dollar spent, taxpayers ought to receive a dollar back in value."

In addition to business leaders, the FORUM has also featured leaders from the world of news and entertainment. In our December 2007 edition, journalist Dan Rather lamented the state of the news media and how round-the-clock coverage has distorted America's political process. "The non-stop news cycle creates its own dynamic," the controversial former

CBS anchor wrote, "one that amplifies the effects of cheap news and news done on the cheap. The quick and easy 'stories' not only serve as a sorry substitute for more substantial news; they also, through the repetition and elaboration of the 24-hour news media machine, lend our political debates and campaigns an atmosphere of superficiality and lowest-common-denominator characterizations more befitting a schoolyard than the democratic deliberations of the



"I propose that we use existing computer technology to match the unemployed with available jobs."

Richard Nixon, 1968

world's sole economic and military superpower.”

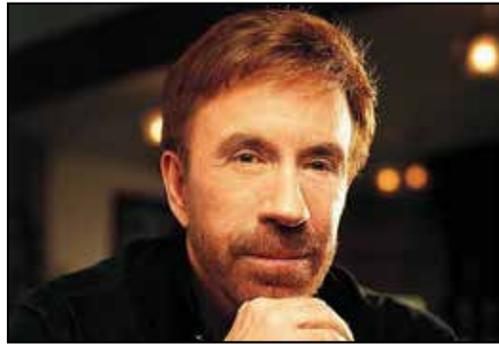
Besides Dan Rather discussing what is wrong with today's modern media, the December 2007 edition of the FORUM also featured Chuck Norris writing about why he is a member of the GOP. “There are several reasons why I am Republican,” the Hollywood action star wrote. “First and foremost, I believe it is people -- not government -- that are granted power by God to make a difference in the world. As such, we should seek in society to maximize the role of people and minimize the role of government. As the Declaration of Independence declares, ‘governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed.’ Or as our Constitution begins, ‘We the

people of the United States...”

A partial list of the individuals and ideas that have been featured in THE RIPON FORUM since 1965 can be found on the website of The Ripon Society. Later this spring, the entire 50-year history of the FORUM will be digitized and made available online as well. There is a lot of history in those pages – history not only of the Republican Party, but also of America during some very turbulent times.

We look forward to making this content available to our readers, and encourage you to bookmark www.riponsociety.org and enjoy the archives of THE

RF



“I believe it is people -- not government -- that are granted power by God to make a difference in the world.”

Chuck Norris, 2007

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Lou Zickar is the Editor of THE RIPON FORUM.

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The BRIDGEBUILDER

“Building bridges is an apt description of what it takes to pass a major surface transportation bill.”

Q&A with Bill Shuster

Shortly after he was named Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in November 2012, Bill Shuster called his Democratic counterpart on the Committee with a simple request:

“Let’s have dinner,” the Pennsylvania Republican said to then-ranking Member Nick Rahall of West Virginia. As Politico later reported, the purpose of the call – and the dinner – was to build a relationship between the two leaders of the T&I panel, while setting a tone for the way Shuster wanted the panel to operate in the coming years.

“He’s been – from the get-go – open, transparent, communicates superbly with me,” Rahall was quoted as saying. “And that’s not only on a member-to-member level but trickles to the staff as well. There’s a staff-to-staff bipartisanship that exists.”

Today, Rahall is gone from the Committee – he lost his bid for reelection last November -- but the tone of comity and cooperation that Shuster established remains. In fact, he has already had dinner with Rahall’s successor, Peter DeFazio of Oregon. And it is in this atmosphere of bipartisanship that Shuster intends to tackle his toughest challenge yet – passing a long-term funding bill to repair and rebuild America’s aging infrastructure.

If anyone is prepared to meet this challenge, it is the eight-term lawmaker from McKeesport. A businessman before he was elected to Congress and the son of Bud Shuster, the longtime Chairman of the Transportation Committee, Shuster brings to the job an eye for the bottom line and an ear for compromise.

He will need both of those skills -- and more -- as Congress tries to arrive at an agreement that has proven elusive so far. The FORUM spoke to Chairman Shuster recently about this challenge and the prospects for action this year.

FORUM: You’ve got an MBA from American University and worked in the private sector for Goodyear before coming to the Hill. What is the business case for rebuilding our roads and bridges and investing in infrastructure across the United States?

SHUSTER: Time is money, whether we’re talking about the commuter that’s stuck in traffic, or a truckload of goods that’s forced to reroute around a bridge that’s no longer performing to standard. Congestion costs us over \$120 billion dollars and nearly 3 billion gallons of wasted fuel. Ten percent of a product’s total cost can be attributed to transportation, so when the system is inefficient, we all pay more for the goods we rely on every day.

Here’s a specific example of the economic importance of good infrastructure. It costs about \$85 to transport a metric ton of soybeans from Davenport, Iowa to Shanghai, China. It costs \$141 to transport the same amount of soybeans roughly the same distance to Shanghai from North

Mato Grosso in Brazil.

Our farmers enjoy a significant competitive advantage because they’re able to utilize our sophisticated, cost effective inland waterways system. Brazilian farmers depend on trucking their product to port, which is more expensive. However, Brazil is planning to invest billions of dollars to modernize its waterborne transportation system. As that system improves, Brazil’s soybeans will become cheaper to transport. Simultaneously, if U.S. infrastructure becomes less efficient, transportation costs for our soybeans will rise, and our competitive advantage will dissipate. This is just one illustration of the economic impacts of transportation network efficiency.

Ten percent of a product’s total cost can be attributed to transportation, so when the system is inefficient, we all pay more for the goods we rely on every day.

FORUM: Congress has passed 27 short-term funding bills to pay for road repairs over the last five years. What is the likelihood the House and Senate will come together on a long-term funding bill this year?

SHUSTER: I'm confident we can reach an agreement on a long-term bill. Short-term extensions have been necessary in the past to ensure that projects don't shut down, but those shorter measures also prevent states, local governments, and companies from being able to plan and undertake bigger projects, and slow down important infrastructure improvements and job creation.

FORUM: At 51.6 cents per gallon, Pennsylvania has one of the highest total gas taxes in the nation. Do you think there is support, both in your state and around the country, for raising the federal gas tax as many have recently suggested?

SHUSTER: Addressing the funding challenges facing the Highway Trust Fund in some way is something that Congress must focus on. The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is focused on developing a reform-based, fiscally responsible surface transportation reauthorization bill that accelerates project permitting and delivery to reduce project costs, streamlines the operations of the USDOT, gets Washington, D.C. out of the way of innovation, and makes sure that we are getting the very best value for the American taxpayers.

Funding the surface transportation bill is the jurisdiction of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee, and my Transportation Committee colleagues and I will continue to work with them, our leadership, the Administration, and anyone else willing to work together to find solutions that will enable us to invest in and improve our Nation's transportation infrastructure.

FORUM: What about implementing a mileage-based user fee? Americans pay for electricity by kilowatt-hour. Why shouldn't drivers pay for road use with a per-mile charge?

SHUSTER: Over the decades, the user fee concept has generally worked well for our surface transportation system. As we continue to consider the future of our surface

transportation system, any option or potential change poses significant challenges, but I believe that we can ensure that we have a practicable, equitable user fee model well into the future.

FORUM: Ways & Means Chairman Paul Ryan has mentioned tax reform as a way to find the revenue needed for a long-term highway bill. Do you think that is a real possibility? What other possible revenue streams are you looking at as well?

SHUSTER: Tax reform options continue to be discussed in the media and by others. Once Congress has any specific proposals, we will take a closer look at them.

I believe Chairman Ryan and other leaders recognize the importance of an efficient transportation system. We are working with them to identify a funding solution that will enable us to do a long-term reauthorization bill that will help reduce the amount of time the American people spend sitting in traffic and improve the flow of commerce across the country.

FORUM: The Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has historically been known as one of the most bipartisan committees on Capitol Hill. Given the hyper-partisan environment we live in today, how difficult will it be for Republicans and Democrats on the panel to come together

behind a long-term funding plan that both Congress and the President can support?

SHUSTER: I strongly believe that infrastructure continues to be an issue where we can find common ground. That has not changed over the years, and I don't intend that to change while I am Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

In 2014, Congress approved the Water Resources Reform and Development Act to help improve our ports, harbors, inland waterways, and other water resources infrastructure. This was the first water resources bill in seven years, and the most reform-focused bill of its kind in decades.

We passed it with overwhelming bipartisan support



I strongly believe that infrastructure continues to be an issue where we can find common ground.

because Republicans and Democrats worked together and understood how important it was to our economy and our competitiveness.

FORUM: What is the key to bipartisanship? Is it relationships, common goals or common interests? In this age without earmarks, how do you work across the aisle and build bipartisan support?

SHUSTER: All of those things are part of it. Members of Congress can and do have disagreements about many issues. But we also were sent to Congress to listen to each other, collaborate, work out our differences, and come together to do what's best for our constituents and our country. That includes ensuring the safe, efficient transportation of goods and people throughout the United States.

Our federal government has always played a significant role in maintaining a strong, cohesive infrastructure. It allows goods that arrive at a coastal port in one state to flow with relative ease to the rest of our country. It permits crops farmed in the heartland to get to markets overseas. Infrastructure ties our Nation together – a lesson learned by

our Founding Fathers.

In the days leading up to the French and Indian War, as George Washington made difficult marches to what was then the boundary of the British colonies in western Pennsylvania, he took note – not for the last time – of the importance of transportation in ensuring that our people and regions were sufficiently connected. Today, this remains as true as ever, regardless of political party.

FORUM: Your father was known as a political bridgebuilder, too. What lessons did you learn from him as you take on the challenge of passing a long-term funding bill this year?

SHUSTER: Of course I've learned a number of lessons from my father over the years, and without a doubt, building those kinds of bridges is an important one. Building bridges is an apt description of what it takes to pass a major surface transportation bill.

I believe trying to build consensus is the right thing to do, but it's also the practical thing to do. There's simply much more we can accomplish for the good of our infrastructure and our economy when we work together. **RF**

Trying to build consensus is the right thing to do, but it's also the practical thing to do.

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Restoring Trust in the Highway Trust Fund

DAVID VITTER

We can all relate to sitting in traffic. The frustration, the gridlock – it all seems reminiscent of Washington politics. In this new Congress, however, there is hope for movement and progress when it comes to updating our nation’s roads and highways.

The transportation infrastructure in our country is in desperate need of attention. While Congress has been able to come up with short-term fixes in recent years, we need to pass long-term reauthorization legislation that invests in rural areas, expands flexibility for state and local governments, and improves safety. We need a bill with investments to create new jobs, provide a boost to the economy, and keep us competitive in the global marketplace.

And perhaps most pertinent to our daily routine, we need to prioritize traffic relief.

As the former top Republican on the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee and current Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I am aware of the major challenges ahead. But I’m very upbeat about the outlook.

We have overwhelming bipartisan support to move forward with investing in our nation’s transportation infrastructure and making critical reforms. But, at the same time, one of my top priorities is to ensure that we are responsible with taxpayer dollars and push for greater efficiencies in our infrastructure policy.

Our surface transportation infrastructure consists of several categories or types of roads that come

together to create a network. In order to have a healthy and efficient network that can move people and goods, all the pieces of that network need to be cohesive and strong.

This means investing in the critical rural roads and bridges that we rely on to safely get our kids to school and move this country’s vast resources including our agricultural and energy resources to market. This means investing in the Interstate system to relieve congestion, expand the lanes of commerce, and improve our connectivity. And it means investing in the vital corridors that link the two.

For example, in Louisiana, I’ve made I-49 South and LA 1 two of the top priorities. These two highways are the lifeline for major development projects in Louisiana. Plus, they’re key to getting Louisiana’s resources delivered to the rest of the country.

Having a comprehensive network is a fundamental component of our nation’s economy and our quality of life. First-class transportation infrastructure in all regions of the country is essential to connect people and communities, and is a critical building block in developing, sustaining, and growing an economy.

However, we can’t work toward that cohesive network if we don’t have a reliable Highway Trust Fund and prioritize proper investment in streamlined, flexible programs. We must restore trust in the trust fund.

That’s why my first goal this year is to reauthorize MAP-21 (“Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st



**My first goal this year
is to reauthorize MAP-21,
a long-term reauthorization
highway bill that prioritizes
projects that improve traffic
flow and relieve our
clogged roadways.**

Century”), a long-term reauthorization highway bill that prioritizes projects that improve traffic flow and relieve our clogged roadways. A smart way to do this will be allowing projects to be bundled together in order to streamline the approval process, consolidate unnecessary paper work, and maximize efficiency to complete projects under cost and ahead of schedule.

Last year, I was able to successfully pass a MAP-21 reauthorization out of committee with the help of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Already this year EPW Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK) has held the first full committee hearing on MAP-21. This is a good sign to get the momentum going in the coming months.

Another major, necessary reform is improving oversight and transparency of how we invest in our roads, highways, and bridges. A prime example is the Highway Trust Fund, which is – again – accelerating towards bankruptcy, and without Congressional action, the Department of Transportation will have trouble meeting obligations sometime this summer and payments to states and local governments will slow down.

It was originally designed to create a sustainable fund paid for by users to benefit those users. However, since 1993, the trust fund has relied on a set of static funding mechanisms to maintain and grow this nation’s infrastructure. As a result, every year its purchasing power is eroded by rising gas prices, increased fuel efficiencies, inflation, and the rising cost materials.

While short-term fixes have allowed the trust fund to continue operating, taxpayers continue to drive on deteriorating roads and bridges wondering where their taxpayer dollars have gone or if future investment may or may not be utilized on a project by project level.

If we are going to be successful at putting such a structure back on a sustainable course and deliver

on the economic promise of sound infrastructure investment, we must restore trust back in the Highway Trust Fund.

That starts with showing where the funding is going and making sure the money is being spent wisely. This also means working to make sure that state and local leaders are determining where our dollars are being spent, not federal bureaucrats.

This year on the EPW Committee, we will move into more comprehensive discussions of our transportation infrastructure needs and look for more reform solutions. We can’t create jobs, start economic growth, and begin to meet our infrastructure obligations if Congress, States, and local communities aren’t approving and building projects.

Our choices are clear. We can work to strengthen a proven, consistent highway trust fund structure that built this nation’s interstate system, benefits every State and every person and relies on State and local decision-making. Or we can continue to let our core, user-fee based infrastructure program erode. Political jockeying and piecemeal funding has been the problem. We have the chance to fix that.

E n s u r i n g
that America has a healthy,

comprehensive infrastructure network is a fundamental responsibility of government, yet the current course we’re on is unsustainable. This is the year we have to take a hard look at all of our options, stop the Congressional traffic jam, and start the work to put America’s infrastructure back on the right path.

That starts with restoring trust in the Transportation Trust Fund. **RF**

U.S. Senator David Vitter serves as Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure.



While short-term fixes have allowed the trust fund to continue operating, taxpayers continue to drive on deteriorating roads and bridges wondering where their taxpayer dollars have gone.

It's Worse than You Think

RAY LAHOOD

America's transportation infrastructure is falling apart, and we as a nation are falling behind. You know it, and your friends and neighbors do, too, because we experience the potholes and congestion daily. Yet somehow, with every possible indicator pointing toward the need for increased investment in our crumbling roads, bridges and transit systems, policymakers at all levels of government have been sitting on the sidelines.

During my time as Secretary of Transportation, I traveled around the United States meeting with local leaders and citizens who were concerned with the state of the roads in their neighborhoods, and the bridges they crossed every day getting to work. I met airline pilots and business commuters frustrated with the outdated air traffic control systems that led to delays on the tarmac and travel headaches. I met seaport workers concerned that our outdated ports would not be able to accommodate the new post-Panamax vessels that will become the norm once the newly widened Panama Canal opens.

I know the deplorable state of our roads and bridges is not new news, but I am here to tell you: it's worse than you think. In a recent 60 Minutes segment, my fellow Building America's Future co-chair former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell and I helped to take an in-depth look at the dismal state of many of America's most-traveled bridges. Here's just one disturbing statistic: twenty five percent of the bridges crossed by Americans on a daily basis are either "structurally deficient" or do not have enough capacity for current traffic levels. And as tens of millions of Americans travel over a bridge each and every day, people are rightly concerned about their safety. In this case, the cost of inaction is high.

The neglect of our roads has led to growing congestion and roads that are not properly maintained. And this is costing taxpayers money.

Because 32 percent of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, taxpayers are paying on average \$444 each year in additional vehicle repairs and operating costs.

And because 44 percent of America's major urban highways are congested, drivers are paying \$121 billion in wasted time and fuel. That amounts to \$818 per commuter each year.



Because 32 percent of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, taxpayers are paying on average \$444 each year in additional vehicle repairs and operating costs.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the U.S. needs roughly \$3.6 trillion in total investment by the year 2020 just to get our systems back to "adequate" status. It's a hefty price tag, but it's one we can no longer afford to put off each year.

While federal investment in our transportation network has not kept pace with needs, many states and cities are struggling with their own funding challenges. But instead of waiting for policymakers in Washington to wake up, they have been taking matters into their own hands. Over the past two years, several governors in red states and in blue

states have either proposed or signed into law measures to increase revenue for transportation. And voters are willing to do the same if the case is made that increased revenue will go directly to specific projects. The success rate of local ballot initiatives seeking to raise revenue has been impressive. In fact, in November 2014, 72 percent of such initiatives were approved.

It is encouraging to see such actions at the state and local levels, but we must not lose sight of the clear and abiding federal role in setting and funding the nation's transportation

policy. Without an overriding national vision and network, America's transportation system would resemble a patchwork of disconnected roads and rails, and goods movement would be greatly hindered, all while costing businesses and consumers billions of dollars.

America's interstate highway system was built because we had a national Highway Trust Fund that was funded directly by the users of the roads through the 18.4 cent per gallon fuel tax. However, due to greater fuel efficiency and more people choosing to drive hybrid vehicles, cars are using less gasoline, and less revenue is flowing to the Highway Trust Fund. And because it has not increased since 1993, this user fee has not kept pace with inflation. Consequently the funding challenges facing our transportation system continue to worsen.

This has been a bipartisan failure, and both Democrats and Republicans must take the blame for not investing in our nation's infrastructure. There are no Republican bridges or Democratic highways, yet lawmakers from both sides of the aisle continue kicking the can down the road and waiting for disaster to strike.

As gas prices continue to slide, now is the time for action. We must raise the federal user fee and index it to inflation. We

need to do it now to address the crisis we're in and to prevent more problems in the future. These investments will help put our friends and neighbors to work, and put America back on track. Several lawmakers from both parties have voiced support for modernizing the user fee, while others have been hesitant. But we don't have time to keep debating this or hoping that pennies will fall from heaven to fill in our potholes: we know how to fix it, and how much money it will take. The only piece missing is the political will.

I believe that men and women of good will from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue can and will find a way to make

the tough decisions and to do the right thing to move America forward.

The revenue has to come from somewhere, and the federal user fee makes the most sense. **RF**

Ray LaHood is the former U.S. Secretary of Transportation and current co-chair of Building America's Future, a bipartisan coalition of elected officials dedicated to bringing about a new era of U.S. investment in infrastructure that enhances our nation's prosperity and quality of life. He is also a senior advisor in the Washington office of DLA Piper LLP.

And because 44 percent of America's major urban highways are congested, drivers are paying \$121 billion in wasted time and fuel.

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Saving the Highway Trust Fund:

Is a mileage-based user fee the answer?

ADRIAN MOORE

The Highway Trust Fund is falling apart. Congress has bailed it out with over \$70 billion since 2008 because spending is consistently exceeding revenues. Looking forward, spending plans are 30 percent higher than expected revenues for the highway account and are 50 percent higher for the mass transit account.

This is not because of massive increases in federal transportation needs. Rather, federal funds are bailing out state highway departments and local transit systems. The notion of Congress raising the fuel tax is very popular with state highway departments, local transit systems and transportation building contractors, but even with lower fuel prices, it is not popular with citizens. Among other reasons, this is likely because citizens can see the Highway Trust Fund needs fixing before it receives more money.

Let's start with bailing out the states. The federal fuel tax was created to build the Interstates, but now is mostly an inefficient pass-through to state programs and projects that have little or no national purpose. If federal transportation dollars were focused on functions that are truly federal in nature, primarily maintaining and improving the Interstate system, current revenues would be adequate for now. States would have to follow the principles of federalism and find their own revenues for state and local transportation needs. The same holds true for local transit systems, the benefits of which are almost limited to the immediate area.

At the same time, we needn't accept that the first thing to do is spend more money. Rather, start with getting more bang for the bucks already being spent. The federal

highway program places little emphasis on this. Indeed Texas, Maryland, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey and the District of Columbia spend less than half of their state fuel taxes on transportation, and many other states spend substantial portions on non-transportation items. Nor does the federal highway program do a good job of driving funding to the most valuable and high-performing projects, or emphasizing use of public-private

partnerships to leverage public funds with private investments, which would make the most use of the dollars it has.

But these factors pale in comparison to the simple, inexorable trend in the United States of using less gasoline and diesel per mile we drive -- meaning we are using the roads more, but paying less tax to do so. That puts rising demand on highway systems and agency budgets while their revenues decline every time the average fuel economy of vehicles improves.

Lower fuel prices may slow this trend as people go back to SUVs and just plain drive more. But the simple fact is, everyone wants to use less fuel if they can, and we have many, many policies to encourage doing so, which

makes basing our funding of transportation infrastructure on taxing fuel ever more tenuous. We need to be looking at the long run and how we can replace the fuel tax with a direct user fee. The most effective user fee will charge drivers by the mile, since that is the actual unit of road being consumed. To that end, the Federal Highways should be working with states to do trials and figure out if and how a mileage-based user fee could work.

Oregon, Nevada, and Minnesota have already tested mileage-based user fee systems, with Oregon taking the



Replacing the decreasingly viable fuel tax with a mileage-based fee will help protect transportation revenues from politicized decisions and tie the revenues to actual road use.

furthest steps to permanently replace gas taxes with road user charges for some drivers, and California is starting a pilot project later this year. Ideally, a functional system for a mileage-based user fee will be developed at the state level and the federal government will cooperate to evolve that system nationwide. A top-down, federally driven approach would almost certainly be too heavy handed, politicized and slow to adapt to changing technologies.

During trials of mileage-based user fees, federal and state partnerships need to answer a series of questions and deal with a number of issues, including, but not limited to:

- Charging by the mile while protecting people's privacy. There must be policies governing any data gathered and its uses with enforcement, oversight and transparency.

- Giving drivers choices on how their mileage is calculated and the fee is determined. Some people will want an entirely private non-technology option like paying a flat fee or periodic odometer reading. Other choices should allow the vehicle owner to control the data that is gathered by more high-tech means as well as the transmission of data to fee collectors. Others can choose more active and less private options like GPS or cellular systems.

- Determining what amount of fee should be used and how to adjust it when needed. A mileage-based fee will be unacceptable to most people if it is an added tax. It has to replace the fuel tax and be set to accomplish that fairly and transparently. If that is done, the new fee will stop the shrinking of revenues and ensure that revenue will be linked to people's use of the systems it pays for.

- Exploring ways to reduce the costs of collecting mileage-based fees. Right now it is more expensive to collect than fuel taxes, and those costs need to be brought down to acceptable levels, which should be possible with sufficient scale and the falling cost of the technology.

Our transportation system is crucial to our economy. Replacing the decreasingly viable fuel tax with a mileage-based fee will help protect transportation revenues from politicized decisions and tie the revenues to actual road use. A more stable and economically efficient way of funding transportation will be better for users and the agencies who manage the infrastructure. **RF**

Dr. Adrian Moore is Vice President of Policy at the Reason Foundation.



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The Mileage-Based User Fee: *At what cost?*

GARY BILLER

Rarely is a problem best solved by adding layers of complexity to an existing process, particularly a budgetary process. Such is the proposal to supplement or replace the fuel tax with a mileage-based user fee to pull the Federal Highway Trust Fund back from the teetering edge of insolvency.

The real problem with the Trust Fund is how the money is being spent, more so than with how it is being collected from road users. While the nation's roads and bridges decline further into disrepair, those who constitute the Washington, D.C. political establishment continue to fiddle.

In the 2007 report, "Paying at the Pump: Gasoline Taxes in America," Jonathan Williams (then of the Tax Foundation) wrote, "... current federal highway legislation authorized over 6,000 earmarks from the Highway Trust Fund. Some of these went to legitimate transportation programs, but others were earmarked for items such as the infamous 'Bridge to Nowhere.' Today, gasoline tax revenue is spent on everything from public education and museums to graffiti removal and parking garages."

At about the same time, the Transportation Review Board noted in its "Special Report 285" that, two years earlier, the federal government collected \$107 billion in highway user fees, with the majority being generated from gas tax revenue. The TRB reported that only \$85 billion of that total was devoted to highway spending.

The Trust Fund allocation process is little better today. Any discussion about the effectiveness of the fuel tax vs. a mileage-based user fee needs to start there, because any revenue collection method will be saddled with the same systemic problem. If only our legislators had the political will and self discipline to limit the incessant earmarking of transportation funds for non-highway projects.

That being said, the fuel tax is the simplest, most equitable method of charging motorists for the maintenance of our highway infrastructure. Heavier, less fuel-efficient

vehicles contribute more to road wear and tear than do smaller passenger vehicles and motorcycles, but by virtue of higher fuel consumption their owners also pay more toward the Trust Fund.

A mileage-based user fee requires tracking of actual vehicle miles traveled. Recording the mileage is an added data collection step, either through periodic odometer inspections or by a much more intrusive GPS-based tracking system that monitors the whereabouts of each vehicle at all times. The GPS method opens the door for creative traffic management schemes such as charging drivers more per mile when they are navigating through congested traffic zones. Urban planning by way of social engineering. No thank you.

The loss of motorist privacy by GPS tracking would come with another hefty cost. Paying an estimated \$50 to \$100 to install the necessary hardware per vehicle for the 250 million registered cars and trucks on U.S. roads translates to a vehicle owner and taxpayer-absorbed cost of nearly \$12.5 billion.

Whether the mileage-based fee is determined by reading odometers or through uploaded tracking information, it does not apportion cost based on the road maintenance caused by specific vehicles that is a hallmark of the fuel tax. Instead, the tax per vehicle mile would ostensibly be the same for an 18-wheel tractor-trailer as it would for a motorcycle; all this at the cost of introducing a new revenue collection system (and requisite overhead) to monitor and collect road user fees based on the distance vs. time profile

Whether the mileage-based fee is determined by reading odometers or through uploaded tracking information, it does not apportion cost based on the road maintenance caused by specific vehicles that is a hallmark of the fuel tax.

of each vehicle.

Critics of the fuel tax point to electric cars and gas/electric hybrids as not consuming enough fuel to contribute their fair share to the Trust Fund. Through late 2014, 3.8 million plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles have been sold in the U.S. since introduction. That constitutes only 1.5 percent of the nation's motorized traffic today. These vehicles are not part of the Trust Fund's solvency issues and likely won't be for several more years. If need be, owners of electric vehicles can be charged an assessment based on average miles traveled to make their contribution to the Trust Fund more equitable.

Index the federal fuel tax to inflation if you must. (The last adjustment to the per-gallon tax was over 20 years ago.) But do not take the existing and inherently fair method of charging drivers for highway use by vehicle fuel consumption and complicate it with a mileage-based user fee that adds new levels of cost, bureaucracy, and privacy concerns. **RF**

Gary Biller serves as President of the National Motorists Association.

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A New Generation of Transportation Service Delivery

JONATHAN L. GIFFORD

A new generation of highway and transit delivery is arriving, and private infrastructure developers are playing an expanding role. Private companies have designed and constructed highways and transit systems for decades. The new infrastructure developers do much more, including operating and maintaining facilities, and providing financing. Their profits depend on meeting contractual standards of quality and performance.

Key drivers of this new model have been emerging for some time. Governments face tight budgets, expanding retirement liabilities, and eroded political support for raising taxes.

Another driver is that transportation system users – motorists, fleet operators, transit passengers, etc. – increasingly expect facilities and vehicles to be bundled with information about operating conditions, reliability, and performance, and delivered to their mobile devices or desktops. They expect 24/7 system monitoring, prompt incident response, and safe and reliable service.

The menu of transportation services is also exploding. Self-driving cars may be here within the decade. Car-sharing services Car2Go and Zipcar are expanding across the country and around the world. Uber and Lyft are disrupting the taxi industry. It's now common to hail a ride in Paris, London, New York, San Francisco and China using the same app.

The staid world of parking is also in flux. Cell phone-based payment systems are now widespread. San Francisco's downtown parking system adjusts prices in

real time to keep some spaces available at all times and allow advanced booking.

Competition for street space is intense. Cities are squeezing bike lanes into existing street networks, and selectively repurposing street parking places to outdoor restaurant seating.

Transportation users are also changing. Millennials aren't driving like Baby Boomers and Gen Xers did. We

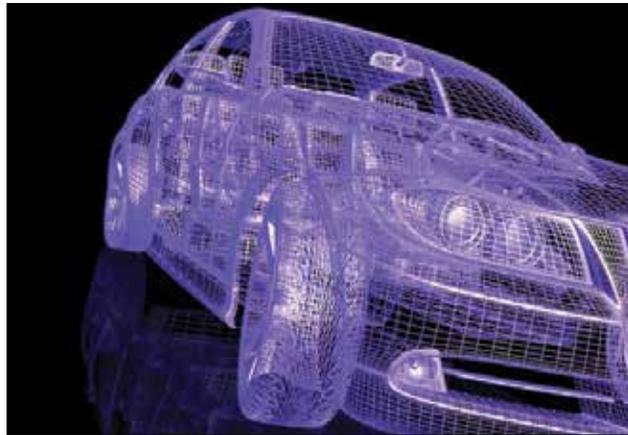
don't yet know whether it's because they prefer walking, transit and ridesharing, or because student loans and tough job markets keep them living with their parents and delaying marriage, kids and buying a car.

Aging Baby Boomers also want to maintain their quality of life if they become unable to drive themselves.

Most governments are not well suited to delivering these complicated bundles of infrastructure and services. Government procurement is difficult. Hiring and retaining the right talent is difficult. Annual funding cycles don't suit large dollar projects. Deferred maintenance often leads

to higher long term costs. And technological change is outpacing the procurement and construction cycle.

Another key factor is the emergence of global infrastructure developers that can deliver complex megaprojects on time (or early), within budget, and operate and maintain them at high levels of reliability and performance for decades. These firms are financing multi-billion dollar projects, and protecting government asset owners when things sometimes go wrong.



Transportation system users increasingly expect facilities and vehicles to be bundled with information about operating conditions, reliability, and performance.

The benefits are already visible. Public-private partnerships (P3s) are delivering large, complex transportation projects ahead of schedule and below budget, in the U.S. and around the world. Virginia has delivered two new toll highway projects totaling \$2.4 billion dollars, both ahead of schedule. Florida has delivered a \$1.7 billion improvement to Interstate 595 near Ft. Lauderdale. Canada makes wide use of P3s for transportation as well as hospitals and public buildings. And experience with P3s is expanding around the globe. U.S. experience, while still limited, has generally prevented losses when they have occurred from being shifted to government.

P3s can't solve all of our problems. Projects sometimes fail, investors and bondholders and governments sometimes lose. But our traditional ways of doing business are failing, too. Think Big Dig, the 30-plus year project to build a highway under Boston that was nearly crippled by traditional procurement, political interference and massive cost overruns.

Most governments are not well suited to delivering these complicated bundles of infrastructure and services.

Government plays a critical role. It owns the physical assets, has responsibility for oversight and monitoring, and usually provides some of the funding.

Government also creates the policy environment that is crucial to P3s' success. Thirty-three states now have P3 statutes. The U.S. is likely to be the largest P3 market in the world in the coming decade. But that requires a fair and transparent policy environment.

Government agencies and elected officials must maintain careful oversight and remove barriers to better ways of doing the public's business. This won't be easy – some of these barriers are deeply entrenched.

But it's important. It's a better way of doing business, and a better way of ensuring our prosperity and quality of life. **RF**

Jonathan Gifford is the director of the Center for Transportation Public-Private Partnership Policy at George Mason University (jgifford@gmu.edu, www.p3policy.gmu.edu, @P3policy).

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Reform Required

When it comes to transportation funding, our priorities are out of whack

JOSHUA SCHANK

The country changes quickly. Congress moves slowly. This presents a classic policy problem where we find ourselves spending federal tax dollars ineffectively because of a policy that has become outdated and in need of reform. In the case of federal transportation spending, the country changed long ago and the reform is overdue.

Reform is overdue in part because Congress itself was the major beneficiary of the outdated system. The original purpose of the federal surface transportation program was to construct the Interstate Highway System (IHS). The program is funded by a federal gas tax, which deposits monies into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). Over time, the program began to encompass many other purposes, including other roads, transit systems, and transportation research, thus expanding the constituencies supporting the program. Congress benefitted not only from bringing home revenues to states and districts for transportation generally, but also from earmarking funds for specific projects. This provided little incentive for wholesale reform.

Change, however, is greatly needed. First, the vast majority (approximately 92%) of federal surface transportation funding is distributed by formula to states with little or no accountability as to whether that money is achieving any specific national goal. While grantees are required to spend different buckets of money on different

infrastructure – some on the IHS, some on transit, etc. – they are not required to prioritize or justify investments based on cost benefit analysis or any larger purpose. Thanks to the latest surface transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), they are required to set targets for specific performance measures.

But they can set those targets as they please, and there is no reward or consequence for failing to meet those targets.

Second, the program is far too focused on capital investment and construction. When the program was intended to build a national system of highways this made sense. But now our system is largely built-out, and instead of new capital we need effective maintenance and operational strategies that help us extract greater value from the initial investment.

Finally, the program is no longer financially sustainable. Congress has

consistently planned, since 2005, to spend more on transportation than they take in. This has resulted in a series of general fund bailouts of the HTF since 2008, at a rate of almost one per year. Congress and our two most recent Presidents have shown no interest or willingness to raise the gas tax, and have declined to develop an alternative source of consistent revenue for transportation. The result is that states and other grantees face continuous uncertainty regarding whether the federal share of their



The vast majority (approximately 92%) of federal surface transportation funding is distributed by formula to states with little or no accountability as to whether that money is achieving any specific national goal.

capital transportation budgets, approximately 45%, is going to materialize. This hinders both long-term planning and wise investment decisions.

Wholesale reform of this program will take time. But there are some actions Congress can take immediately to make improvements. These include the following:

Make more funding available through discretionary grant programs. Formula funding is necessary in order to help states and localities maintain their highway and transit systems. But federal money should also be targeted towards national priorities, and discretionary programs with a role for Congress and the Executive have proven most effective way to do that. Some obvious federal priorities based on the national goals specified in MAP-21 include freight, system reliability, and environmental outcomes. Discretionary programs targeting these goals, with specific performance measures intended to evaluate proposals from states and localities on an objective basis, could provide an improved return on federal investment.

Use those programs to incentivize innovation and revenue. Discretionary grant programs can do more than target funding towards national transportation goals – they can also provide incentives for states and localities to take greater political risks. Raising revenues for transportation is always challenging politically, but when federal dollars can reward increased investment it

becomes easier. Similarly, new innovations in operations such as congestion pricing, intelligent transportation systems, and shared-use mobility are more likely to become reality when federal money is there to incentivize their development. A federal role in providing incentives for things states and localities want to do -- but face political barriers to accomplishing -- is potentially a very effective one.

Decide on a permanent funding source. The federal transportation program will not be effective if funding for it continues to be cobbled together every year, or even every few years. In order to provide stability, Congress should determine a consistent funding source for transportation. If increasing the gas tax is politically impossible, as it appears to be, it is time to admit that and move on. Congress should dedicate existing gas tax revenues to formula programs that provide funding for system preservation, and commit to providing general funds for new discretionary grant programs. Even if the total amount available for these programs might vary, a commitment to a funding source for the long-term would be a substantial improvement over existing instability. **RF**

Joshua Schank is the President and CEO of the Eno Center for Transportation.

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In Speech to The Ripon Society, Rand Paul Discusses State of the Union Address and Senate Agenda this Year

WASHINGTON, DC -- In the four years he has served in the U.S. Senate, Rand Paul has made a name for himself by questioning party orthodoxy and challenging the political establishment.

Both qualities were on full display on January 21st at a breakfast meeting of The Ripon Society, where the Kentucky Senator not only discussed the State of the Union Address delivered the night before, but shared his thoughts on the congressional agenda and issues he would like to see addressed in the coming year.

“He is on course to add more to the debt than all 43 previous Presidents combined,” Paul stated, referring to President Obama. “And he has the gall to brag about reducing the deficit. The man has no limits. What amazes me most about him is that he will say a lot of things that I can agree with. The problem is his lack of sincerity. On almost every issue where he said there was bipartisan support, he has not really helped to push the ball forward.

“A good example is the NSA... Congressman Sensenbrenner was one of the authors of the Patriot Act, and he said that we never intended to have this kind of mass, bulk surveillance of the American public. And yet it is going on. The President could end it at any moment through Executive Order. It was done by Executive Order. He is very passive about changing it. He will say all the right things about privacy, and about balancing privacy with security. But he

has not done anything.”

Despite his differences with the President on these and other issues, Paul made clear he does not believe that politics should stand in the way of good policy and the search for common ground.

“You know, for all the fire, I will work with him,” he stated, adding that he phoned the President recently



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to discuss one of our nation’s most pressing national priorities -- rebuilding America’s roads and bridges. “I called and offered to work with him. I called him three months ago and said, ‘Do you want to build infrastructure in this country? I have a great opportunity, and it is something you supported in the past. There is \$2 trillion overseas in American profit. Let’s try to bring it home and put it in the Highway Fund.’”

To that end, Paul noted that he is also working with California Senator Barbara Boxer on legislation that would achieve that goal.

“We’re very close to getting a bill written that will reduce the tax to bring that money home and then designate the money for the Highway Fund,” he said. “I think we can get 10 or 15 Democrats on board. My biggest opposition right now is actually Republicans who want repatriation, but want it to be a part of overall tax reform. I’m fine with that, but good luck getting the President to sign it and getting enough Democrats to support a tax reform bill that is of any value. It’s going to take forever and there are a thousand moving pieces with tax reform. We’re all for it, but it’s not going to happen quickly.

“If we’re looking forward to 2016 -- and some of us are -- we need to show that we can do something while we’re in charge and do something that works and move forward with it. I say

let’s go ahead and pass this repatriation and see if money will come home and see if we can spur more economic gain, build more roads in the two years and take credit for it. And whoever our nominee is, our nominee can move forward and take credit for it.”

In addition to his effort to use repatriation dollars to rebuild America’s roads, Paul said he also spoke with the President about criminal justice reform --

an area, he noted, where the President recently made some good strides.

"I will complement him," Paul remarked. "He did something this week that ended, I hope, civil forfeiture. This, in my mind, is one of the worst things going on in this country. The local police force can take your money. There is an incentive because they get the money if they take it from you. Here's the rub -- you're guilty until proven innocent."

"Why is this a big deal?" he asked. "You saw all the protests across America. They began over specific instances, like the Michael Brown case and the Eric Garner case. But people are not just angry about that. It is more than that. There is an undercurrent of unease in this country. In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke at Stanford about two Americas -- one America, where everyone sees opportunity and knows the American dream, and the other America, where people don't believe in that dream."

Looking out at the crowd of Hill staffers, members of the media, and Washington policy professionals, Paul continued:

"I can stand up and give this identical speech in a church, and I will. In an Evangelical, mostly white church, I will tell them the same thing -- the war on drugs is having a racial outcome. And I think people are listening. So if the President wants to work with me, I have five or six bills. I have a bill to get rid of mandatory minimums. Mandatory minimums will often say that you have 15 years to life imprisonment and the judge has no discretion. That is absolutely wrong, and we should get rid of it. We have a bill out there that would do that.

"I also have one that says that if you behave yourself, particularly for nonviolent crimes, you should be able to expunge your record. You know, many Republicans are complaining that everyone is on welfare and nobody is working. Well, why don't we make

it easier for people to work by getting rid of their record? How many people in here want to hire a convicted felon? The other thing we can do is to take some of these felonies and make them misdemeanors. This still doesn't make things right, but we need to give people a chance. If Republicans want a bigger party, we should show compassion."

In that regard, Paul concluded his remarks by saying he would also like to see Republicans take action on another key challenge facing America -- immigration reform. "We can get that done," the Kentucky lawmaker declared. "It's not going to be everything the other side wants. The biggest thing you hear about in Silicon Valley is that they want people with advanced degrees to stay in the country. I'm all for it. The Republican House passed that overwhelmingly

"I am for protecting America's vital interests around the world. But I see war as the last resort, and not the first."

last time. Let's do it again. Let's pass expansion of that.

"There are economic visas. There is a visa where if you have a million bucks, you can come to this country. Who wouldn't we want that has a million dollars? There are 10,000 of them who maxed out last year. Why not double that? Why not have 20,000 of these economic visas? And when we reach that peak, double it again. Why would we ever not want these people? We also want people at all ends of the spectrum. Migrant workers -- if they're not here, we're not going to have the crops picked.

"When the Senate bill came forward last time, I ended up voting against it. One of the reasons was because it limited the number of workers coming in. It said only 100,000 people could come in to pick crops. But everybody estimates that 400,000 people come in every

year. What is that? It is a recipe for disaster. It's a recipe for more illegal immigration."

Following his remarks, Paul was asked for his thoughts on U.S. foreign policy and the projection of military force abroad. Here, too, he was blunt.

"We have been projecting our power quite a bit," he observed. "We projected our power in Libya, and it's an absolute disaster. If there is one fact where the evidence is difficult to refute in the Middle East, it's that we have toppled secular dictators, gotten less stability, chaos, and we've gotten a rise of radical Islam. I believe America to be more endangered now after the Libyan war than before the Libyan war."

"Syria is just a huge mess. Both sides are bad. There are two million Christians living in Syria. Ask them whether or not they want Assad to be toppled and bombed. There is a Republican Senator who loves to project power everywhere. He's for bombing both sides. He's for bombing ISIS and Assad. You ask Christians,

all 2 million of them in Syria, whom would they rather have in power: Assad or ISIS? They've lived with Assad. He's not perfect by any means -- that's an understatement. He's a horrible dictator that has oppressed his people and killed his people with chemical weapons. But they fear ISIS more than they fear him."

"A year ago, there was this other debate. The President, after the chemical weapons attack, wanted to bomb Assad. If we would have bombed Assad, I feel very certain that ISIS would now be in control of all of Syria. Do we have to do something? Yes. I am not happy about going back into the Middle East. But we have to go back there because ISIS is now a threat to our embassy in Baghdad and to our consulate in Erbil. I am for protecting America's vital interests around the world. But I see war as the last resort, and not the first." **RF**

Ripon Profile

Name: Renee Ellmers

Occupation: U.S. Representative (NC-2)

You've been in office for four years now. What's been the toughest part of the job during that time? As a former nurse, when I see a problem, I work quickly to fix it. But by design, this is not how our government was created to operate. Our government was deliberately structured to move slowly, and that has definitely taken some time to get used to. Oftentimes, I find that Congress is focused on "checking the right boxes" instead of addressing the real issues of the day. As Republicans, I'd like to see us be more proactive and results-oriented – similar to how nurses operate in their day-to-day.

And the most rewarding part? Is there a victory or experience you've had that has made it especially worthwhile? A recent victory that I was particularly proud of is when my legislation, the Trafficking Awareness Training for Health Care Act, passed the House by unanimous consent. This bipartisan legislation will educate healthcare professionals so they can recognize signs of human trafficking and intercede on the patient's behalf early on. I know that it will play a crucial role in stopping the heinous crime that is human trafficking.

How has your background as a medical professional and intensive care nurse shaped your perspective as a Member of Congress? My healthcare background has given me the knowledge needed to implement better healthcare policy for our country's citizens and it has given me an "insider's perspective" as to what truly needs to be addressed in order for our country to receive better healthcare. Having dealt with the administrative hurdles that come when working in a hospital setting, I couldn't have had a better career to prepare me for the political environment.

You've been outspoken in your support for immigration reform. What are the key principles and elements that must underlie any reform plan? Regardless of where one may stand on the specifics of this issue, we can all agree that there are problems with existing immigration policies in the U.S. We must address the immigration issue in three areas – first, we must secure our border. Once this happens, we need to reform our current legal immigration system, as most would agree it is not consistent or reliable. Once these two issues have been tackled, we should address those who are living here illegally.

You've also been critical of President Obama, saying recently that his State of the Union Address was filled with "empty promises and over-blown rhetoric." If you could send one bill to the President's desk for him to sign tomorrow, what would it be? My Human Trafficking bill because it implements sound healthcare policy and it is a complete bipartisan effort. More importantly, this will assist in eliminating the pervasive crime that is human trafficking.

What about your other priorities over the next two years? Healthcare has been and will always remain a priority for me, especially in this new Congress. It's the reason I came to office, and I will continue to prioritize and advocate for patient-centered healthcare. In fact, I look forward to working with my colleagues on an upcoming bill that will seek to replace the Affordable Care Act in order to promote consumer-centered healthcare. Another priority of mine will continue to be Energy & Commerce Committee's 21st Century Cures Initiative. I am pleased to say that I have two items included in the legislative package emerging from this initiative. Additionally, last Congress, I launched a Grid Innovation Caucus with Congressman Jerry McNerney of California. It is a goal of mine to grow this new caucus and work to educate members about issues related to grid innovation.





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