

we live up to what the President said a week ago. This is not even bold action. This is continuing to do what we have been doing in the last year. It is not too much to ask. It is time that we made the comfortable a little bit uncomfortable so we can give some comfort to those who are uncomfortable.

We will be voting on this tomorrow. I hope that Senators will not be swayed by this, "Well, we cannot do this because the House has gone home." Well, let us comfort the uncomfortable. Let us tell the poorest of the poor we are not going to leave them in the lurch, we are not going to cut them by 50 percent, and let us have them come back and fix this tomorrow night. They can do it.

I appreciate the indulgence of the occupant of the chair for allowing me to talk about my amendment because I will not have much time in the morning. I only have 30 minutes. Some other people may want to talk. I know no one is here. I hope some people may be watching and taking heed of this. I will be back tomorrow morning, in a more succinct manner, obviously, to lay out this case on why we have to adopt an amendment to keep the community services block grants at last year's level.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the Senator from Iowa, Senator HARKIN, has come to the floor to offer an amendment that makes reference to the community services block grant funding and the possibility that if we pass a continuing resolution without adequately funding this program, communities all across America will be denied some basic funds they need.

I have made a point, as I travel around my State of Illinois, of asking village presidents and mayors and leaders how this money is used. It turns out to be money that is essential for many programs. It is one of the most unusual programs in that there is such a wide variety of things that are done with these dollars by communities, from afterschool programs for children at risk to programs for senior citizens that are essential for their well-being.

I am sorry I wasn't here earlier to join with Senator HARKIN, but I come to the floor in support of his effort. America can do better. We can make certain that we fund these essential programs so that the vulnerable across America are not left behind. If we focus on this, as we should have before Hurricane Katrina—and we will in the fu-

ture—it is going to be a stronger nation.

I want to make sure my voice is added to that of Senator HARKIN in support of this valuable program.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REIMBURSING CHARITABLE WORK

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, earlier this week the Washington Post reported that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was making plans to "reimburse churches and other organizations that have opened their doors to provide shelter, food and supplies to survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

I understand FEMA's good intentions here, but we need to be very careful. There may be extraordinary circumstances when FEMA may need to rent buildings that might happen to belong to a church or mosque or synagogue. And I understand that under both Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, there have been appropriate ways to provide charitable choice and to fund faith-based organizations. I support that. I am currently working with Senators on both sides of the aisle on our Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on legislation to help all of Katrina's 372,000 displaced schoolchildren, including some who are enrolled in private and even religious schools. But the kind of reimbursement described in the Washington Post article makes me want to waive three yellow flags and two red ones.

One obvious concern is constitutional. The first amendment says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Paying churches for work they choose to undertake as churches raises obvious questions. That is not my major concern. My major concern is making sure that we honor what it has always meant in America to be a volunteer, to be charitable, and to respect our religious traditions.

When Jesus fed the loaves and the fishes to the multitude of 5,000, he didn't send the bill to Caesar. As Americans with a strong religious tradition,

we believe in helping our neighbors. In the book of Mark, Jesus tells us to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" and to "love their neighbor as thyself." This idea of loving and caring for our neighbors is not limited to Christianity. Jesus himself drew the commands to love God and love our neighbor from the Old Testament in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. I don't ever remember reading: "Love God, love your neighbor, and send the bill to Washington for the expenses."

From pioneer days, volunteering and helping our neighbors has been an essential part of the American character. No other country in the world has anything similar to what we have in their traditions. They do not give as we give. They do not have that same spirit. It is one of the things that makes this a unique country. Our forefathers would be dumbfounded to think that if a neighbor's barn burned down and the community joined together to rebuild it, that they would expect a check from Washington, DC to pay them back.

In that same Washington Post article, Reverend Robert E. Reccord of the Southern Baptist Convention helped put this in balance when he said:

Volunteer labor is just that: volunteer. We would never ask the government to pay for it.

At my church in Nashville, Westminster Presbyterian, where I am an elder, we took up a collection for the victims of Katrina and raised about \$80,000 in cash. We then filled up the parlor in the church with other things that we were told they needed in southern Mississippi. We loaded up a truck with diapers and Clorox and other necessities, and our associate pastor went down there with that truck for a few weeks to help people in need. Are we now supposed to send the Federal Government a bill for the food and the supplies and three weeks of the pastor's salary? Of course not. No one in our church expects that, nor should they.

So churches and synagogues and mosques and religious organizations that are being good neighbors aren't looking for a Government handout. They are looking to lend a hand. We should respect them. We should thank them. We should honor them. They are performing an invaluable service. We encourage them by providing tax incentives for charitable giving. But we should also remember that virtue is often its own reward and that some rewards are in heaven, and we should be very careful before we start reimbursing churches for their charity.

I ask unanimous consent that the article from the Washington Post to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: