

Clearly, the date on which a person becomes eligible for the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program depends on when that person lost his or her job.

Moreover, the number of payments for which that person is eligible also depends on when he lost that job because the benefits are paid in a series of four tiers, with each tier lasting a certain number of weeks.

Because this program has been forced to stop operating, people who lost their job recently will not receive as much unemployment compensation or as many weeks of unemployment compensation as people who lost their jobs months ago.

Continuing the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program is simply a matter of fairness to those people if they continue to seek employment.

From the week of June 2—21 days ago when this program expired—until the end of last week, there were right at 4,000 people in my State who had run out of State benefits. Those individuals then would find they did not have the benefit they could have had had they run out of State benefits and lost their jobs a few weeks earlier.

Until the Congress acts, none of these people will be eligible for the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program. An additional 4,600 people who are in one of the lower tiers of the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program will exhaust their tier of benefits and be unable to receive the next tier of benefit. That is roughly 8,000 New Mexicans who will be affected by the expiration of this Federal program.

In my view, the obstruction that has forced this program to stop is not fair to those New Mexicans. It is not fair to many Americans. These are people who worked for companies that were able to hang on to their employees longer than other companies once the recession hit. Cutting the benefits of these individuals is not fair. These individuals are ones who primarily live in States such as my home State of New Mexico where the recession hit hardest a few months later than it had hit in other parts of the country. It is not fair that the people in these States should be eligible for fewer weeks of benefits when they have paid into the unemployment insurance system just like everybody else.

It is easy to find maps on the Internet to show States that are disadvantaged by what the Senate has failed to do. There are animated maps that show how high unemployment spread across the country. It started on the east coast and the west coast. It crept toward the middle of the country. States such as New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Colorado, I say to the Presiding Officer, were among the last to be affected by the recession. It is the people of these States who are being disadvantaged because the Emergency

Unemployment Compensation Program has been allowed to lapse.

I want to be clear that I do not believe this program needs to be continued indefinitely, not least because of the substantial cost involved. When the job market improves, we need to find a way to phase out these costs. In my view, the fair thing to do would be to choose a date and say people who lose their job after that date and begin drawing unemployment benefits after that date will not be eligible to receive the extra weeks of benefits that the Federal Government is adding to what the States are providing.

The economy is much better than it was last year when the country was losing 750,000 jobs every month. The free-fall has stopped. The private sector is once again creating jobs at a very modest level. But the unemployment rate is still at 8.7 percent in my State of New Mexico and at 9.7 nationally. Now is not the time to eliminate the assistance this program has been providing to the many people who have been forced to lose their jobs during this recession.

I urge my colleagues to support the continuation of this Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program until we can find a fairer way to phase it out and terminate these extra Federal benefits.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I see a colleague seeking recognition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the senior Senator from New Hampshire be recognized.

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

GULF OILSPILL

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, America is facing a lot of challenges. We have the issue of unemployment compensation that my colleague just mentioned and how to pay for that so we do not put this country into further debt. We have the two wars we are fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq and a myriad of other challenges that are facing this country. But a clear and present danger exists right now in the Gulf of Mexico, a clear and present danger to my home State of Florida.

I have come to the floor almost every day over the past week while we have been in session to talk about the need for the Federal Government to have a more robust response in preventing this oil from coming ashore.

Unfortunately, the situation has gotten worse. In a report this morning on television that I saw by Mark Potter, the oil now is coming ashore in Pensacola in a way that is profoundly worse than it has been. As he described it: It is oil as far as the eye can see. Watching those pristine white beaches covered in brown splotches of oil this morning—it breaks my heart. It breaks my heart for what it is going to mean

for the people of northwest Florida, what it will mean for the environment; but it breaks my heart even more because I think a lot of this could have been prevented. Many Members of this body, as well as the one down the hall, have been asking for weeks, where is the Federal response? Where are the skimmers off our coast to suck up this oil before it gets on our beaches, into our waterways and into our estuaries?

Frankly, I have been extremely frustrated with the response from this government. I believe—and there are many who believe this as well—that the Federal Government should not be involved in all aspects of our lives. But what the government does, the government should do well. And one thing the Federal Government should do, and should be uniquely qualified to do, is to help in a time of disaster. In this circumstance, however, the government has fallen far short.

One thing that has been very frustrating to me is trying to determine how many skimmers are in fact off the coast of Florida. Skimmers are these vessels which are equipped to suck the oil off the water, bring it on to a place where it can be contained and disposed of and get that oil out of the ocean. As of yesterday, we found out that there were 20 skimmers off the coast of Florida, plus an additional 5 skimmers that the State of Florida went out on its own and rented.

When I met with the President a week ago yesterday in Pensacola, I raised the issue with him: Why are there not more resources stopping this oil from coming ashore? Admiral Allen, who was at that meeting, and who is the head of the response—the former Commandant of the Coast Guard—told us there are 2,000 skimmers in the United States. So why are there only 20 off of Florida? I have asked the Coast Guard and even the Navy, why are there not more skimmers? I have come to find out that we cannot even determine how many skimmers there are.

The State of Florida, as of yesterday, in their Deepwater Horizon incident report, shows 20. We know an additional five were rented. The Federal Government's report, the National Incident Command Report, says there are 108 skimmers. We asked the Federal Government—the Coast Guard—why this number is different than the number in the State Incident Command Report. We can't get a good answer. And when we drilled down on this 108 last week, we were told: Well, that number isn't correct.

In followup, and having met with the Navy yesterday, and the Coast Guard—and I thank Secretary Mabus for making the Navy and the Coast Guard available to us to talk to them about this issue—we got a more detailed response about skimmers that the Coast Guard reports are off the coast of Florida, and now the number appears to be 86. So we have the State telling us 25, we have the incident report from the Federal Government saying 108, and

now the Coast Guard says it is 86. We can't get a straight answer.

This gets to the base of the problem, which is that we don't know what we are doing down there in the Gulf of Mexico. The Federal Government is not putting the focus and attention on this issue that it should be. When I met with Admiral Allen, I asked him about the 2,000 skimmers he had reported were available in this country and why those skimmers weren't in the Gulf of Mexico now, some 65 days after this disaster first started. I got answers ranging from, well, some are obligated to be other places in case there is an oilspill—to me, that is like saying your house is burning down and we can't send a firetruck because we may need a firetruck for another house that might burn down—to this answer: They are legally constrained. This is what I heard from the Navy yesterday when I met with them. Some 35 skimmers they would like to bring down are legally constrained.

I asked this question yesterday: Why aren't we approaching this issue with a sense of urgency? Why doesn't the President sign an Executive order waiving any legal constraints? Why aren't we doing everything possible to marshal those resources into the Gulf of Mexico?

I have received a new piece of information from the U.S. Coast Guard. It is the National Response Resource Inventory of skimmers and capabilities throughout the whole country.

This document shows the different districts in this country. I will get this blown up and, hopefully, come to the floor tomorrow and show this in greater detail. It has the country broken up by area into districts. Florida is in a district with Georgia and South Carolina. That is district 7. These are Coast Guard districts, for the most part. It shows how many skimmers there are. These are not skimmers offshore, of foreign countries, which we will talk about in a moment. These are skimmers here in this country.

In district 7, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, there are 251 skimmers—251. In the Texas district, district 8, there are 599. So between the gulf coast of Texas to Florida there are 850 skimmers, and we have somewhere between 25 to 86 to 108, depending on whose number is right. Perhaps they are all incorrect, but given the best accounting possible, there are 108. Where are the other 742 skimmers, and why aren't they being deployed? And that is just in the gulf coast.

In the district that includes California, there are 227 skimmers. In the district that includes Washington State, there are 158. In the district that includes Michigan and other Great Lakes States, there are 72. In the district that includes Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, there are 160. In the district that includes the mid-Atlantic, there are still another 157. Why are these skimmers not headed to the Gulf of Mexico? Why are they not there already?

It is not a good answer that they are needed for another oilspill, because we have an oilspill—the worst oilspill that we have ever seen in this country, and one that is washing sheets of oil this morning onto the beaches of Pensacola in my home State of Florida.

That is the national picture. Internationally, the State Department came out with a report which I talked about yesterday—it came out last Friday—that talks about all the offers of assistance from foreign countries, offers that were made by Belgium on June 15, the European Maritime Safety Agency on May 13, by the Republic of Korea on May 2, by the United Arab Emirates on May 10 to give us skimmers, and all of them are still under consideration. Months have gone by and the U.S. Government hasn't returned a phone call to these offers of help.

It is amazing to me that we would not be accepting these offers of assistance to bring in these skimmers from foreign countries. When there is a disaster around the world, whether it is a tsunami in the Far East or an earthquake in Haiti, the United States of America is the first to answer the call. We, because of the goodness of our people, go in and help these countries, as we should. Now they are offering to do for us what we have done for the world and give us assistance, yet we are saying no. That is also beyond belief. The State Department, as of last Friday, reported 56 offers of assistance from 28 countries or international groups. We have accepted 5—5 out of 56—BP has accepted 3, and 46 remain under consideration.

I want to talk about one of these offers specifically. This ship is a Dutch ship from a company called Dockwise. This ship is the Swan. This is a huge vessel that, when equipped with skimming equipment, can suck up 20,000 tons of water and oil—20,000 tons. It was offered to the United States on May 6—May 6—and we never answered the call. Instead, a ship that has one-twentieth of its capability was accepted by the Coast Guard.

I received some followup information yesterday, and here is the response as to why the Coast Guard did not accept this superskimmer for use in the Gulf of Mexico. The response was that it was going to be equipped with arms—sweeping arms, which are what skims the oil into the boat—and BP was able to purchase two sets of these arms from another company and, therefore, the ship wasn't needed. The arms sweep the oil into a ship; the ship holds the oil. The arms are only half of the equation. And if this ship holds 20,000 tons of oil and water mixture, it is certainly needed.

Saying that we didn't need it because we got the arms and we put them on another ship makes no sense. The ship that was used instead has one-twentieth of the capability. That is an American ship, and I am glad we are using it, but we should be using both of them. We should be using every ship

possible. And why should we be using every ship possible? Because oil is washing up on the shore of my State and the Federal Government seems anemic, at best, in its response.

What is this doing to our oceans, our waterways? The Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota—which I had the privilege to visit a couple of weekends ago—does wonderful work with marine life and has these unique, almost torpedo-like automated vehicles that go out in the water to check to see whether the oil has spread. It is one of the vehicles that helped us determine that this plume of oil, in fact, does exist beyond what you see on the surface. They are reporting yesterday, in an article that was published, that rare plankton-eating sharks are moving toward the coast of Florida. Ten healthy whale sharks were found Friday about 23 miles southwest of Sarasota. They are moving away from the oil—this oil that is growing not just on the surface but underneath.

What will be the long-range implications of this disaster, not just on our economy but on our environment? It is hard to tell. This morning, Florida State's marine biologists are reporting that the fish population has been severely damaged in the Gulf of Mexico.

Mr. President, I will continue to come to the floor every day we are here to sound the siren, to ring the bell and call for more response and a better effort to protect my State of Florida, as well as the other States in the gulf. This response is anemic, and our failure to act is outrageous. This government must do a better job.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor to my friend and colleague from New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, first, all of us express our deepest concern for what the Senator from Florida, the people of Florida, and those along the gulf coast are going through. It is an unconscionable situation going on down there. I think the Senator has correctly indicted the failure of the people responsible to bring the resources that are available on site in order to try to address at least the skimming of as much of the oil as possible. I appreciate his doing this on a daily basis until we can get something done. This is critical, obviously.

I want to speak today, however, about an issue that is equally threatening to our Nation—although not as ominous, in many ways—and that is our debt and the continued spending by this Congress in a way that ignores the fact that we are on the path to passing on to our children a nation which they will not be able to afford as a result of the massive debt which is being put on their backs.

We heard today from a number of Senators from the other side of the