

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to use such time as I might consume.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NORTH DAKOTA FLOODING

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, the city of Minot, ND, in my home state, is facing a dire emergency. Minot and other communities on the Souris River in my home State are facing a flood of epic proportion. We have a wall of water heading toward the city. I am told the sirens have just sounded in that town alerting people to evacuate.

This is the headline this morning from that town's major newspaper. The headline reads: "Projection: Devastation. Minot residents evacuate as historic rise in the Souris River approaches."

This flood is a result of overly wet conditions for an extended period of time, a record snowmelt, combined with record rainfall in the basin above the city. We are now told that perhaps a third of the city will be underwater, and unprecedented rains have filled upstream reservoirs to capacity, leading to a dramatic change in the forecast in 48 hours.

On Saturday, we were told we could expect the river level to reach elevation 1,555 feet in the city. On Monday, we were told 1,566 feet—an 11-foot increase in 48 hours. The result is the defenses that have been built up over an extended period of time, that gave us about 3 feet of freeboard, are absolutely incapable of dealing with a flood of this magnitude and a rise happening this rapidly.

This is the headline from yesterday in the Minot Daily News, which kind of summed it all up: "It's a sad day. Crest could be 10 feet higher than June 1."

It is staggering to understand what is happening here. There are four reservoirs above the city of Minot, all of them filled to capacity. In fact, we have been told the floodgates of the major reservoir in Canada are wide open. They cannot control the flow of water. Whatever comes in is going out because they have lost the ability to meter out the water more slowly.

This is what we are seeing happen all over Minot as crews rush in to try and provide secondary defenses, to protect as much of the city's critical infrastructure as possible—schools, water treatment facilities, other critical infrastructure—that is going to be necessary to be able to continue to fight this flood menace.

This was the headline in the Bismarck Tribune: "Crisis to the North. Souris Floods Force 11,000 Residents From Minot." It is a town of 40,000. So when you have 11,000 people forced to flee, that has a devastating impact.

This is the headline, again, from the Minot Daily News of June 20, on Monday: "Water Woes Continue. People in

danger zones advised to be prepared to evacuate." And as I have said, that evacuation is occurring as I speak.

The Fargo Forum, which is the biggest newspaper in our State, had this headline: "11,000 Forced Out. Rising Souris moves up evacuation time. Residents in heart of city work fast to save what they can."

My own cousin and her family have a home that is in danger. They have moved everything from the basement to the first floor. Now they say they will have 7 feet of water on the first floor of their house. This is happening to people throughout the Minot community.

These pictures that ran in the newspapers tell the story in a powerful and clear way. What we have is somebody trying to go into a neighborhood. You can see there is a police vehicle, because they are under mandatory evacuation. This person tried to get over to perhaps rescue a pet or take care of some last-minute business; maybe turn off the gas. And there he is, stuck in the water, as these floodwaters rise, and rise very rapidly.

This picture also gives a perspective on what we are confronting. Here is the dike, levee, that has just been raised, and you can see there is maybe 2 or 3 feet of freeboard there. But what is coming is 10 more feet of water, so there is absolutely no way these dikes can possibly hold. There is no way they can protect the city. These dikes are going to overtop, and thousands of residents will be displaced.

This picture shows another shot. In this place, they didn't have the dikes covered by plastic. You can see a couple of feet of freeboard there. All these houses are at risk as this wall of water comes our way.

This is another shot showing a house, and you can see they have the main dike and they have also built a secondary dike to protect their home. All these efforts will prove to be for naught because of this unprecedented wall of water. In fact, this is five feet higher than in all of recorded history. That is what is happening to this community of Minot, ND—home to 40,000 people, home to one of the major Air Force bases of the United States, home of the Minuteman missiles, and home of the B-52 bombers. Minot, ND, the fourth largest city in my State, is about to experience the greatest devastation in the history of the town—a flood worse than the 1969 flood by many feet, and that flood was a modern-day record to that point, the 1969 flood.

This chart shows the evacuation zones. This gives you some sense of how major the relocation of people is out of this city. These are the evacuation zones 1 through 8 that go right on the edge of the river, and you can see all of these people under mandatory evacuation.

They are going to have to leave, and they are going to have to leave very quickly.

Madam President, I would like to end as I began, by showing the headline this morning in the Minot Daily News. "Projection: Devastation."

There is no way around it. There is absolutely no way to respond when the flood forecast changes this rapidly and the water is coming this quickly. The result is these people are going to face high water not for just a day or two. Typically in a flood, the water comes and the water goes. In this circumstance, the water is coming and it is not leaving anytime soon. They have told us as recently as yesterday that we could expect high water until the middle of July. Can you imagine, to have your house under water from late June to the middle of July, the devastation that will result.

So this headline, "Projection: Devastation," says it very well. That is what we are faced with in this community.

The bottom line is, we are going to need help. And we are certainly getting it. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Corps of Engineers, FEMA, and all of the other Federal agencies that are helping. The National Guard, certainly hundreds of troops there are doing a fantastic job of patrolling these dikes, of helping people move, of making certain that people get out of harm's way because job number 1 is protecting people's lives. We also have an obligation to do everything we can to protect as much of the property as is humanly possible. We very much appreciate the assistance the Red Cross is giving.

I just met with General Kowalski of the U.S. Air Force, a three-star general who has as part of his command the Minot Air Force Base. I called the Secretary of the Air Force yesterday and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force the day before and asked them to be alert to the need for that base to help us because there is so much they can provide in assistance, being out of harm's way. The base is 12 miles north of the town.

General Kowalski came to me this morning to deliver the message that the U.S. Air Force is prepared to help in every way possible. We deeply appreciate that commitment and that support. We remember very well in 1997, when we had record floods in Grand Forks, ND—that is home to one of the other major Air Force bases of the United States—the extraordinary support and help they provided to us at that time.

The final board I will show is the headline from the Minot Daily News of June 21: "It's a sad day." It is indeed a sad day. But the people of North Dakota are tough, they are resilient, and they are going to come back. I have every confidence that we will rebuild this town. It will be a tough slog, but the people of North Dakota are equal to it, and we deeply appreciate the help we are getting from people all across America.

I have seen America at its best in a time of crisis. When people are down,

when they are hurt, when they are devastated by natural disaster, the people of the United States rally and help out.

That is the ethic of my State. When a farmer gets sick and can't harvest his crop, the neighbors pitch in. When a barn burns down, the neighbors pitch in. That is the best of community spirit. That is the best of America. We are going to be relying on that generosity of spirit in the days ahead.

Madam President, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

MILITARY SUPPORT

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, we are going to hear tonight from President Obama about his plans for changes to troop levels in Afghanistan.

Last week I joined with a bipartisan group of my Senate colleagues on a letter to the President urging him to begin a sizeable and sustained reduction in troop levels, and I hope he takes the opportunity to do that tonight. But with all the talk about troop levels, I want to make sure we remember this isn't just about numbers. It is about real people with real families, men and women who are fighting to defend our country and are depending on us to do the right thing for them now and when they come home.

As chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have an inside look into something that too often doesn't make the front pages: the unseen costs of war, the costs that come after our men and women take off that uniform.

We all hear about how expensive war is while we are fighting it. But for so many of our servicemembers what happens on the battlefield is just the beginning.

We are seeing suicide rates that are much higher among Active-Duty servicemembers and veterans than among civilians. We are finding they are having trouble accessing the mental health care so many of them desperately need. We are watching as these men and women are sent out on tour after tour. Too often they are having a tough time finding a job when they come home. We owe it to them and their families to do everything we can to get them the support and services they need.

Far too many of our servicemembers have sacrificed life and limb overseas, and we must honor them and their sacrifices by making sure we take care of them and their caregivers not just today, not just when they come home,

but for a lifetime. This is going to be expensive, and I am going to fight to make sure it happens. I think it ought to be considered as we think now about the war in Afghanistan.

The enemy we face is real. The Taliban and al-Qaida have demonstrated through their actions and their words they mean us great harm. I was sitting in the Capitol on September 11, 2001, when I saw the smoke rising from the Pentagon. It is a moment and a day I will never forget.

As Americans, we know what this enemy is capable of, and we need to do everything we can to make sure something like that never, ever happens again. That is why I believe American forces need to be prepared to fight terror and terrorists wherever they may be.

After September 11, Afghanistan was providing safe haven for them, and we are absolutely right to go in and take them out. But we know terrorism isn't a country; it is a network and a threat that exists around the world. We have seen that our terrorist enemies are not tied to a specific location. They are not bound by lines on a map. They are in Afghanistan, but they are also in Yemen, in Iraq, in Pakistan, and elsewhere. In fact, our top target in the war against terrorism, Osama bin Laden, was just killed in a brave operation in a safe house in Pakistan.

It is absolutely critical we have a military that is prepared to take on our threats wherever they may be. So as we consider the wars we are fighting now in Afghanistan and in Iraq, we need to make sure we aren't overextending the servicemembers we are counting on; that we continue to have the financial resources available to defend ourselves against the very real threat of terrorism that continues to exist; and that the costs and resources of boots on the ground for years on end doesn't inhibit our ability to go after terrorists wherever they are. We need to know our military and intelligence operations are nimble and have the resources they need to keep our Nation safe from all threats.

We have been fighting in Afghanistan for 10 years. I voted for that war. It was the right thing to do. Our brave men and women in uniform have done everything we have asked of them, including finding Osama bin Laden. But we need to make sure today that our strategies are adapted to meet the threats of today. Leaving large levels of troops in Afghanistan is not the best use of our resources, especially in these tough economic times. It is time to re-deploy, rebuild our military, and focus on the broader war on terror.

I am hopeful President Obama will make an announcement tonight that reflects those current realities, and I am going to keep working with this administration, the Pentagon, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and all others so that as we fight to keep America safe and to take care of our servicemembers coming home, we do it right.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT EFFICIENCY AND STREAMLINING ACT OF 2011

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75 be vitiated and the Senate adopt the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75, S. 679, the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Will the clerk report the bill, please.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 679) to reduce the number of executive positions subject to Senate confirmation.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011".

SEC. 2. PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS NOT SUBJECT TO SENATE APPROVAL.

(a) AGRICULTURE.—

(1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR ADMINISTRATION.—Section 218(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6918(b)) is amended—

(A) by striking "subsection (a)" and inserting "subsection (a)(3)";

(B) by striking subsection (c); and

(C) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (c).

(2) RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE ADMINISTRATOR.—Section 232(b)(1) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6942(b)(1)) is amended—

(A) by striking " , and with the advice and consent of the Senate";

(B) by striking paragraph (2); and

(C) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (2).

(3) COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION.—Section 9(a) of the Commodity Credit Corporation