done. I encourage my colleagues to end this shameful filibuster of the disaster relief bill. Let us proceed to a full debate on how to help our fellow Americans—our fellow Americans—as quickly as we can.

I have taken a lot of time of the Senate. I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:41 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

APPROVING THE RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the urgent need for FEMA disaster funds, which is under this Burma joint resolution. I was very concerned when I heard some of my colleagues in the House of Representatives demanding that spending cuts be in exchange for supplemental disaster relief funds. Last night, we could not even pass a procedural vote to proceed to a bill that would provide this needed relief. This raises the question, What kind of country are we? Are we a country that takes care of the victims of disasters without hesitation or reluctance or are we a country that engages in misguided debates in the midst of a disaster when our citizens need us the most?

My State of Minnesota has seen its fair share of natural disasters over the last few years. In the past year and a half, President Obama has declared seven Federal disasters in my State. I have seen the devastation Mother Nature can cause. I have seen communities that desperately need Federal assistance to recover. Northwest Minnesota has seen the phenomenon of 100-year floods turn into nearly annual events. Every spring, towns in the Red River Valley of the north hope that this year will not see another record-setting flood.

This spring, I visited Georgetown, MN, and watched as they built emergency earthen levees to protect their town. The town had run out of the clay needed to build their levee, and the only choice left for them was to dig up their baseball field—their park, the diamond and the rest of the park. I watched as they dug up the heart of their community to protect their homes and businesses.

That same day, I visited Oslo, MN. Flooding in the Red River turns Oslo into an island town. Residents are cut off from the rest of Minnesota for weeks as the Red River floods all of the surrounding roads. That night, as I left, I was one of the last cars to make it out of town before all the roads were closed, and its residents prayed that the temporary levees would hold.

The residents of Georgetown and Oslo were doing what they could do to protect themselves, but not all disasters can be anticipated. On June 17 of last year, storms brought 39 tornadoes, 26 funnel clouds, and 69 reports of hail in Minnesota. Three Minnesotans died.

The town of Wadena was hit the hardest; 234 homes were damaged. The roof was torn off the high school, and the county fairgrounds and community center were destroyed.

After a disaster, Minnesotans have enough to worry about. It would be terribly unfair to pile politics on top of their worries. Natural disasters just happen. They are acts of God, and they happen without warning. Minnesotans need to know, when their State and local governments are overwhelmed, that their Federal Government will be there to help them recover. Every State needs to know that; we are one country. And they need to know we will not play politics with their lives and their livelihood.

Many of the same people who are demanding that we offset the costs of natural disasters have voted year after year to fund our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq without paying for them. Some have done this for nearly 10 years now. They have passed on well over $1 trillion in debt to our children to finance wars that have not been a surprise and that we could have and should have been budgeting for from the beginning.

For the last 10 years, we have paid for wars by borrowing from countries such as China willing to finance our debt and by giant emergency spending bills, as they are called. That is unusual in American history, where wars usually prompt reevaluations of our fiscal policy.

This spring, I introduced my Pay for War resolution to address this fiscal irresponsibility. My resolution would simply require that war spending be offset in the future. To be sure, there can be real emergencies that require the immediate exercise of military force with its attendant costs. That is why my resolution allows the offset requirement to be waived in such emergencies. But when you know year-in and year-out that you are going to be at war, you should budget for that and not just pass the costs on to your children.

Iraq and Afghanistan have cost us well over $1 trillion, and we will be paying for years to care for the veterans who came back with the wounds of war. That did not singlehandedly create our deficit problem, but it sure made it a lot worse. Yet many of the same people who now demand that we must offset disaster spending for Americans who have lost their homes or are suffering otherwise have been fine with spending staggering sums of money on our wars—without offsetting them. Doesn't that seem just a little hypocritical? I wonder, what kind of mindset does it take to conclude that it is OK to pass on to your children the costs of war. Yet, when Americans have lost their homes or had their communities destroyed, it is not OK to respond to that emergency in an appropriate way? It just does not make sense to me.

When Congress plans its spending, it can and should be accounted for through a budget. But when emergencies arise—and natural disasters are the quintessential emergency—we should not hesitate to act for the good of the American people. I believe the United States of America is a country that protects its citizens when they are at their most vulnerable. I hope this Congress will confirm that conviction by voting for emergency aid to the communities across this Nation that have been devastated by natural disasters.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as you no doubt know, the State of Vermont has been hit very hard by Hurricane Irene. The storm caused widespread flooding, resulting in a number of deaths, the loss of many homes and businesses, and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to our property and our infrastructure. I have visited many of the most hard hit towns, and I was shocked and moved by the extent of the damage. Many of these towns still today have very limited access because the roads and bridges that link them to the outside world have been destroyed. Irene will go down in history as one of the very worst natural disasters ever to hit the State of Vermont.

Let me take this opportunity again to thank everybody who has lent a hand to help their friends and neighbors stricken by this disaster. I especially wish to commend and thank our emergency responders—they did a fantastic job—the Vermont National Guard and our local officials for all they are doing to assist communities and individuals in getting back on their feet.

We still do not know the cost of this disaster, but let me share with you just a few preliminary figures, and really this is quite remarkable, remembering that Vermont is a State of about 630,000 people, with approximately 200,000 households.

Today, already more than 4,200 Vermonters—and by and large, those are households—have registered with FEMA. With 200,000 households, we have over 4,000 that have already registered with FEMA.

To date, there have been more than 700 homes confirmed as severely damaged or totally destroyed. Again, we have about 200,000 households and 700 homes have been confirmed as severely damaged or completely destroyed.

More than 72,000 homes across the State were left without electricity.

That is about one-third of the total. Thousands lost phone service. And in some areas, these services have still not been restored.

The storm knocked out 135 segments of the State highway system as well as 33 State bridges. Thirteen communities were completely isolated for days. Thirty-five roads and bridges are still shut down, while many others are only open for emergency services.

Hundreds of farms and businesses have been destroyed, undermining the fabric of our rural economy.

Our Amtrak and freight rail services were completely suspended, as tracks literally washed into rivers. One of our two Amtrak lines is still down today.

The State's largest office complex—we have a very large office complex in Waterbury, VT, near our State capital, in which 1,600 State employees go to work every day. It is the nerve center of the entire State. That complex was flooded. Those 1,600 workers have not been able to return to their offices, disrupting the ability of the State to deliver critical State functions.

At least 90 public schools were either directly damaged or inaccessible because roads washed out and could not be opened on time. Five public schools remain closed until further notice.

This is but a short list of the devastation experienced by the State of Vermont as a result of Hurricane Irene. I know that, as in times past, we will pick up the pieces and restore our homes and businesses. That is what Vermonters will do. Vermont communities stick together in hard times, and it has been absolutely amazing to see the volunteer efforts taking place from one end of the State to the other. What comes to mind now: police officers from the northern part of the State relieving their brothers and sisters in the southern part of the State who are under stress. We are seeing that in almost every area—strangers coming to help people whose homes and businesses were flooded. But the simple fact is, Vermont can not do it alone, nor can any other State hard hit by disasters. The scale of what Hurricane Irene did is overwhelming for a State of our size. The Federal Government has an important role to play in disaster relief and recovery. Historically it has, and today it has.

When our fellow citizens in Louisiana—and I see the Senator from Louisiana here—suffered the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, people in Vermont, in a very deep sense, were there for them. When the citizens of Joplin, MO, were hit by the deadly tornadoes, people on the west coast were there for them. When terrorists attacked on 9/11, everybody in America was there for New York City. That is what being a nation is about.

The name of our country is the United—U-n-i-t-e-d—States of America, and if that name means anything, it means that when disaster strikes one part of the country, we rally as a nation to support our brothers and sisters.

I would like to thank, in that context, Majority Leader REID and Senator LANDRIEU for their commitment to drafting a disaster relief supplemental appropriations bill to provide $6.9 billion in disaster relief funding.

At a time when funding is tight and every appropriation is subjected to even more intense scrutiny, the majority leader and Senator LANDRIEU are doing exactly the right thing in addressing these needs now. Senator REID has my full support.

While it is imperative for Congress to adequately fund FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, the Federal response, in my view, should be more comprehensive, as it has been for past disasters of this scale.

In particular, it is imperative to address the severe damage to roads and bridges by providing funding for the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program. In Vermont alone, preliminary estimates to the federal-aid highway system are well in excess of $500 million and likely will be much more. That is an incredible amount of money for a small State such as Vermont. For a State that receives a total Federal apportionment of $210 million annually, the scale of damage relative to our State's ability to pay for it cannot be overstated.

Similarly, it is important to provide sufficient emergency funding for programs such as community development block grants, the Economic Development Administration, the Emergency Conservation and Emergency Watershed Protection Programs at the Department of Agriculture, and the Disaster Loan Program at the Small Business Administration.

Additionally, given the significant impact of the floods on the stock of affordable housing, it is very important to include an appropriation for the HOME program, as well as an additional disaster allocation of low-income housing tax credits. In Vermont, more than 350 mobile homes were destroyed or severely damaged, and many trailer parks will never reopen. In other words, we are going to have to make up for a lot of lost affordable and lower income housing.

Let me conclude by saying this country has its problems. We all know that. But if we forsake the essence of what we are as a nation—and that is standing together when disaster strikes—if we forgo that and no longer live up to that, I worry very much about the future of America as a great nation.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to support the remarks of the Senator from Minnesota, Mr. FRANKEN, and the Senator from Vermont, Mr. SANDERS, who have described beautifully several different aspects of this debate. Senator FRANKEN said: How is it that so many on the other side rush to support funding for wars and rebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq and never ask for one dime to be offset, and yet at a time when Americans need help, they are not, let's say, leaning forward?

I think there are a lot of Americans, not only from around the country but from their own States, who might be very puzzled by this sudden commitment to find offsets when it comes to rebuilding neighborhoods in Minnesota or Vermont or neighborhoods in Virginia or in Massachusetts or in other States, such as New York, which have been so hard hit. I think they will have some explaining to do, which is why I hope today, when we retake this vote, many of my friends on the other side will consider the leadership shown last night by Senators BLUNT, BROWN, COATS, COLLINS, HELLER, and SNOWE. These six Senators voted yes to move forward to try to find a way to find the political will to provide funding for disaster victims now, not wait but send them a powerful and strong and clear and unambiguous signal that the Senate and the Congress hear their cry. We know of their anxiousness and distress and we will respond and we will fight about how to pay for this later—but not now.

They need to hear from us now that help is on the way. What they need to hear is that the fund will be replenished. What they need to hear—the mayors, county commissioners, and Governors, Republicans and Democrats, from Governor Christie in New Jersey to Governor McDonnell in Virginia, who have given their support for funding disasters now—what they need to do is not worry about us because they have enough to worry about. They have roads to rebuild and neighborhoods to rebuild and rivers to get in their banks.

I heard today from Senator SCHUMER that in one of the canals—I think the Erie Canal—the lock is no longer connected to the canal. That is how powerful the water was. There is a lock and a canal, but they are not together. That is a problem not just for New York but for the entire northeastern transportation infrastructure, which affects us all.

As a Senator from Louisiana, I, of course, feel particularly strong about this because many of these Senators, Republicans and Democrats, came to our aid 6 years ago when Katrina hit—the worst natural and manmade disaster because, as you know, it wasn't just the hurricane that did us in down there on the gulf coast, it was the collapse of a Federal levee system that should have held and didn't and breached or broke or evaporated in 52 places and left a major metropolitan, internationally famed city underwater and literally fighting for its very survival—a metropolitan area of over 1.5 million people.

This country rallied, after a lot of push from me and others and the private sector stood up and the nonprofit community was terrific. We still have literally thousands of volunteers still

coming. It is so heartwarming. They are coming to Louisiana and to Mississippi to help us rebuild. I just drove the gulf coast 3 weeks ago—my husband and I. We said, let's go see the coast of Waveland and the coast of Mississippi and how it is coming along. I visit our neighborhoods regularly in south Louisiana to see how they are coming along. Still, 6 years later, they are struggling. I don't think there is 1 house up for every 10 destroyed in Waveland today.

That is how hard this work is. It doesn't happen automatically. Mississippi is working hard and Louisiana is working hard. I can only imagine how other States feel, such as Joplin, MO, which was hit by a tornado with winds that might have exceeded 250 miles an hour. That is unheard of.

This is not time for my friends on the other side to sit on their hands or take out their green eyeshade and pencil and figure out how we are going to pay for it this week. We have all year to discuss that. We need to send them emergency funding now and learn how to pay for it later.

This is what our map looks like. Green is too pleasant a color for this map. This indicates the destruction—or the number of disasters that have been declared by the President. For the first time, I believe, in our Nation's history, a disaster has been declared in every State but two—Michigan and West Virginia. Michigan technically could be declared a disaster because it has been under an economic disaster for several years but not a natural weather event. They most certainly are having very tough economic times in Michigan. West Virginia always has tough times as one of our poorest States. The whole country is in need.

Why would the other side sit when America is lit up with disasters? We have to ask them to reconsider and move forward with the $7 billion help now. Not only is it the right thing to do and the moral thing to do and what Americans do for each other and what we should do, but it is all about—besides the moral aspect, which is obviously the most important—there being a real immediate economic benefit to this. If there was ever a jobs bill, this is it. I can promise you, having lived through this disaster recovery, it is like a shot in the arm for these communities. Literally, every single dollar that leaves our hands and goes to theirs will be spent immediately on food, clothes, and building materials. This is the most direct stimulative job creation we could do, and we need to do it now, this week, and send a strong signal to the House of Representatives: Don't fool around with disasters, and let's get this job done.

Let me just show you that when people say you haven't provided funding for disasters, we have provided funding in our base bill for disasters. I see the Senator from California, and I will be just 2 minutes more. I want people to know we have budgeted for disasters. I chair the Homeland Security appropriations bill. It is about a $42 billion bill. As we know from marking the 9/11 anniversary this past Sunday, that department was created after 9/11 to respond to new threats. We pulled disparate agencies together—tried to pull them together. That is still a work in progress. We have $42 billion. So we budgeted for FEMA in that budget, in 2003, $800 million. It was obviously not enough. So then we went up because disasters were increasing to 128. In 2005, Katrina hit and completely shattered the model. The expenses of Katrina, Rita, and Wilma exceeded the entire budget of Homeland Security. It was $43 billion just for Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. The whole budget is only $42 billion.

When people say pay for it out of our budget, we cannot do that. In some cases, it exceeds the entire budget of the country. It is not right to pay for past disasters with money we use to prepare for future disasters. We have beefed up base funding, but we don't have the level of base funding that potentially may be necessary. Now is not the time—we can see—now is not the time to keep the east coast waiting and Missouri waiting and the floods along the Mississippi River waiting and some people in California waiting. Texas, might I say, has had 20,000 fires. This is not the time to keep the people of Texas waiting while we figure this out. Eventually, we are going to have to figure it out, but we don't have to do it this week.

I see the Senator from California. I will yield to her, and then I will be happy to add a few more comments to the record.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to proceed to the motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not agreed to on the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66 be agreed to; that the motion to reconsider be agreed to; that the time until 4:15 p.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; and that at 4:15 p.m., the Senate proceed to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are a lot of things going on on Capitol Hill this afternoon. We will make sure people have ample time to vote, as long as somebody doesn't carry it to extremes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask the majority leader, before he leaves, I didn't hear all he said. Is this the fact that we are going to vote again on proceeding to a bill that will allow us to take up this emergency FEMA funding?

Mr. REID. My friend is absolutely right. We need to do this. During the caucus that was completed, the Senators from New York indicated, for example, that the Mohawk River because of the storms changed course. The Erie Canal lock doesn't work. They are going to have to spend lots of resources to get the Erie Canal back, which handles commerce in that part of the State. That is just one thing.

So the answer to my friend from California is, yes, we need to get people help now. People are desperate.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, taking back my time, I am very pleased we are having another chance at this because—just for the information of the public—we fell short of the votes required to take up this emergency bill. I just looked up the meaning of ''emergency'' in the dictionary. It says:

> A serious situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate attention.

That was Webster's dictionary—no, it was dictionary.com. They have the best definition, and I want to repeat it. An emergency is a serious situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate action.

That isn't a Democratic definition or a Republican definition or an Independent Party definition. That is what an emergency is. To anyone who says don't worry; if an emergency happens we can take care of it just from our existing funds, that is not true.

Senator LANDRIEU is our leader in the Appropriations Committee, and what she told us in a meeting we just had a few minutes ago is that there is support in her committee to fund FEMA—the Federal Emergency Management Agency. They are the ones, as everyone knows, who gets out there.

I will never forget the wonderful James Lee Witt who headed FEMA during the days of Bill Clinton. He was out there with Senator FEINSTEIN and myself when we had earthquakes, floods, fires, and everything. There wasn't even a question. He knew we would rebuild. He knew he could make those commitments.

I will just say this: Senator LANDRIEU held up a map that shows 48 States having been hit by horrible emergencies, some that we never anticipated, such as a terrible earthquake right here in this area, floods that had not been experienced since the 1920s in Vermont, and California has had some horrible problems, and we have had some terrible emergencies. The President worked with the Governor, and we have these disaster declarations. But now, because the funds we set aside just weren't enough—and that isn't anybody's fault, it is an emergency, a serious situation that happens unexpectedly—we have to move.

I have heard one of the Republican leaders in the House say we have to cut spending to pay for this emergency. He has recommended a place to cut that will cut jobs. It will cut jobs and it will stop us from being able to reinvigorate our manufacturing sector. That is ridiculous, unnecessary, and unwarranted. We all know we are going to do

deficit reduction. We all know there is a smart way to do it. We did it when Bill Clinton was President. We stopped spending on things we didn't need, we invested in the things we knew would create jobs, and we asked the billionaires to pay their fair share—thank you very much.

So let's not get this mixed up with deficit reduction. We are on a path to cut the deficit. We will cut the deficit. We know how to cut the deficit. We did it under Bill Clinton. We balanced the budget, we created surpluses, and we had the debt on the downswing. But don't confuse that with making sure our communities are OK.

The Senators from Vermont spoke today at our luncheon, and one of them had tears coming down his face talking about a woman who was very ill in one of their communities who had to go to chemotherapy. It used to be a 5-minute drive in her car. Now she has to drive an hour and a half in order to get her treatment. So please don't talk about making someone like that suffer even more. Talk about what we can do as a nation when we pull together as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

I spoke at a memorial in my hometown on September 11, and when I put together my remarks, I kept harping on the unity we had then.

Well, we need to be true to ourselves and to our constituencies and to our beliefs, but there are moments in time when we come together as Americans. I don't know the party affiliation of that woman in Vermont, and I could care less. We need to help people who get stuck in these fires, in these disasters—in earthquakes, floods, and droughts. I do not believe the American people think when we have that kind of act of God—and that is the legal term as well as a true term—they are on their own.

Last night, our leader tried to move to a bill that would allow us to take up assistance to these people in desperate need and keep our promises to those who were the victims of disaster in my home State and other States. I believe I am correct that Senator LANDRIEU told us we have 48 States since January 1. So I don't know, but I think my caucus is going to stand on its feet until this is done. We are not going to back off.

This is one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. I want to give justice to the people who are struggling, who are suffering, and who pay their taxes. I want to help the small businesses that are underwater. There is no liberty if someone is trapped in a house somewhere that is cut off because the road went out. The Senators from Vermont talked about the roads that are impassable—impassable.

So last night we had a bad vote. We didn't have enough votes. We need 60 votes. I hope anyone listening to the sound of my voice will call their Senator and double-check how he or she voted because Hurricane Irene could cost more than $10 billion. It would make it 1 of the 10 most costly disasters in U.S. history. We have seen record flooding on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and we have seen lives lost and farmland devastated.

Senators spoke in our caucus about what happened to their farmers. They do not have crop insurance for all these crops. These particular crops were not covered. One of our colleagues said: It is bad enough we have to import oil from other countries; do we want to start importing our food from China and be reliant on other countries for our food supply?

Right now, as I stand here, we have brave heroes—our firefighters—battling wildfires in California and Texas. Here is a picture, because a picture is worth a lot of words—here is a picture of a fire raging out of control. The firefighters are as close as they can get to the flames. This one shows the Comanche Fire in Kern County. It has burned more than 29,000 acres and is threatening 2,300 homes in Stallion Springs, CA.

The firefighters have gotten this fire 60 percent under control because they have had help from FEMA. They have been able to get help from the Federal Government. But the fire season in California has just begun. A lot of people don't realize that in our State September and October are the driest and the hottest months. So every wildfire threatens our communities just as this one. Right now FEMA barely has enough funds to get through the next couple of months. FEMA is running low on resources, and funds are so low they can't provide assistance for communities that are rebuilding from past disasters let alone respond to what is happening right now on the ground as we speak.

I heard the Lieutenant Governor of Texas complaining—complaining—about the situation in Texas, that they need more Federal help. Well, fine. He ought to call up his Senators and tell them to vote with us today to get that Federal help.

We have more than $380 million in disaster recovery projects on hold—several in California. We had a tsunami March 11, 2011. We need the $5.3 million that has been promised to help communities in Del Norte, Monterey, and Santa Cruz, CA. This tsunami did damage.

Let me show a picture from the 2010 mud slide. In January and February of 2010 in California we were hit by severe winter storms, with flooding and mud slides. You can see a very important road has been blocked, again, shutting off people. We have a lot of mountains, so we have to cut through those mountains. Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles County, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Siskiyou Counties were hit, and FEMA promised them funding. They met the criteria, they had the level of damage, and they are waiting. Right now they can't proceed without the $3.5 million they need to recover.

So that is what this impasse is about. This isn't about make-believe. This is about real people who are cut off, shut off, businesses shut down, people laid off, and suffering. So let's not have a political spat around here. This isn't a partisan issue. When your neighbor's house is on fire, you don't haggle over the price of a garden hose. You get the hose out, connect it, and put the fire out.

The good news is we have people from both parties who are starting to realize we have to do this. We have to send a message to the House. An emergency is an emergency. We have to put aside politics for the good of our country.

So I will close where I started, with the dictionary definition of ''emergency'': a serious situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate action.

We all agree we have serious situations in our great land. We all agree we didn't expect all of this. Although, if I might say with a different hat on—my hat as the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee—we better understand that climate change is coming. We better understand what we are seeing now is going to be a new normal. It pains me to say we have done nothing in terms of addressing some of the causes. But guess what. Regardless of our views, as my kids would say, we are where we are, and it is what it is, and this is what it looks like in too many parts of our great Nation.

So an emergency is a serious situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate action, and I echo the call by our Democratic leader for immediate action at 4:15. I hope the phones will light up and everyone will call their Senators. It is time to vote yes on our vote at 4:15 and get on with this so people will know we stand with them in this greatest of nations; that we don't walk away from our people when they are suffering like this.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from California for her poignant, eloquent, and appropriate words. I thank the chair of our Homeland Security Subcommittee which handles FEMA disasters for the great work she has done.

Mr. President, I spent several days, both this week and last week, visiting the places in upstate New York that were so badly damaged. Upstate New York is a large community. Without New York City and the suburbs we would still be about the eighth or ninth largest State, and the eastern half of upstate New York has been unexpectedly devastated not once but twice—first by Irene and then by Lee.

It comes on top of an awful season. Because we have had so much rain and the ground has been so wet when these

torrential rains occur—one a hurricane, one a tropical storm—no groundwater could be absorbed and it made things worse. Let me tell you a few of the things I have seen, just to share with my colleagues.

We went to a small village in Schoharie County. Schoharie County is a beautiful agricultural, dairy county, and it is dotted by small towns like much of upstate New York. We have the third largest rural population in the country. Only Pennsylvania and North Carolina have larger rural populations than New York. We went down a beautiful street, a nice typical street. It could be a street you might see on an Ozzie and Harriet-type TV series. Every single house, street after street, had all its belongings piled in front. The water from Schoharie Creek had so overflowed its banks that the entire town was flooded, not by a foot of water but by 3, 4, 5, 6 feet of water. Out front you see the lives of the people whose lives have been so turned inside out by the torrent of water. They have lost thousands of dollars worth, each family, at a time they can ill afford it, but it is beyond that. It is the picture of grandma and grandpa at their wedding, the only one left. That is gone. It is the chair dad loved and sat in every night when he came home from work. It is their lives wiped out in a few sheer moments.

In this town in Schoharie County and in most of New York State, almost all, the evacuation plans were amazing. We lost very few lives. In some counties, with huge amounts of devastation, no lives were lost in most. That is because of the great emergency work of our relief workers. As bad as Schoharie County was, because years ago FEMA had installed their warning system and warning sirens, people were able to get out of their homes and avoid being drowned. A dam that again we had provided some dollars for, Federal dollars, didn't break. Had it, it would have been even worse. But FEMA money to prevent disaster has helped strengthen the Gilboa Dam. So the creek went over it and around it but not through it, and that saved lives.

I visited a place in Ulster County. These are vignettes. The town of Shandaken is beautiful, in the foothills of the Catskills. There is a major road that connects one part of Shandaken to the other, a county road. As you are driving along, it is newly paved macadam. All of a sudden you see the yellow strips to prevent you from going further and there is a 30-foot gash in the road, totally gone—30 feet. But what is astounding is it is 20 feet deep. At Esopus Creek, the waterway there changed its course, went through not just the macadam, not just the underlay that holds the road, not just the dirt fill of a foot or two, but through the bedrock, through 10 feet of bedrock. It will take years to bring this road back, and it is a cost the town of Shandaken can't afford. Our little towns, our little villages, our cities, even our counties of some significant population, can't absorb the millions and millions of dollars of damage. The total estimate by our Governor is we have suffered more than $1 billion of damage from Irene alone, and of course Lee moved slightly further west than Irene.

I visited a lock in the Mohawk Valley and the city of Amsterdam. It had been very damaged. On a dam that a bridge went over, the metal of the bridge, the steel girders were twisted out of shape. But locks 9 and 10 a little further downriver are no longer functioning because the torrent of rain created such swells that the Mohawk changed its course. So the locks are here and the river is here.

The Erie Canal, one of our great pieces of history, is damaged so that it can't function. It won't function for quite a long time, even with Federal assistance—I don't know without Federal assistance what would happen—for months and even years.

Then I went to Binghamton. Maybe that was the saddest of all. Binghamton is a city that has struggled. It had IBM in its early days. IBM was founded there. Nothing is left of IBM there, and the city is struggling. It is at the confluence of two river valleys, the Susquehanna and the Shenango, and it had been terribly flooded in 2006. Senator Clinton and I visited. It was awful—hundreds of homes, the sewage plant, the hospital, Lourdes Hospital. Incidentally, Lourdes Hospital wasn't damaged because, again, FEMA, with remediation money after 2006 helped supply some of the money for a wall that prevented the Shenango River from damaging the hospital. So it, thank God, is functioning.

But then we went to the shelter, with 500, 600 people who had been there for days and have nowhere to go because they lived in rental apartments in downtown Binghamton, which was totally flooded. Every hotel and motel room in Binghamton is taken. There are very few rental apartments. They have nowhere to go—nowhere to go. Maybe FEMA will come in and bring trailers, as they did for your great State of Louisiana, Madam President. But without FEMA, I don't know what these people will do.

They have food. The Red Cross is doing a great job. But they have nothing else. Their homes are gone, their belongings are gone, their clothes are gone. One gentleman came over to me and said, I would just like to try to get to my bank—which is closed and flooded—so I can take a few dollars out so I can buy some slippers. It is awful.

What does this mean policywise? It means America cannot ignore these people. The people of New York, when Louisiana had trouble, didn't say: Our tax dollars shouldn't go to Louisiana. The people of New York did not say, when there were terrible tornados in Joplin: Our tax dollars should not go to Joplin. And I hope that the people in the rest of the country, represented by so many here on both sides of the aisle, will not say we are not going to step to the plate. America has always stood for disaster relief—always—because we are one Nation. We all have known that when God-given disasters, way beyond the powers of mankind, come, no single community can take care of it themselves, and that is why the Federal Government has traditionally stepped in and regarded it as an emergency and we have stepped in. We haven't had strings attached or conditions, or: Put it in this bill and we will give you a little money now and we will see what you need later.

FEMA, by the way, has done a great job. I want to tip my hat to the people of FEMA who did such a wonderful job. But they are basically out of money. Right now in Missouri, none of the relief work continues despite the devastation in Joplin, because they only have money to deal with the immediate emergency of Lee and of Irene that hit New York State. The FEMA workers are doing great, and the people, the volunteers I saw everywhere, everyone is pulling together. Why can't this Senate and this Congress pull together the way the people of our communities pull together when a disaster hits?

We had one gentleman whose house was gone but he hadn't even been able to tend to it because he was a skilled worker and he was tending to the homes of others for 5 days. I saw him and his sisters, and they even had some humor about it. They were wearing shirts, ''Goodnight, Irene.''

We have to pull together. We pay on an emergency basis, without looking for setoffs, for the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. We build bridges there, we build roads there, we give aid there. Now we are saying, When it comes to our American citizens, we are not going to do that any longer? What is going on?

This afternoon we will vote simply on a resolution. To those of you not schooled in the arcane ways of the Senate, it is called a motion to proceed. It simply allows us to put legislation on the floor so we can aid these victims. And it can be amended. If some of our colleagues think this is wrong or that is wrong, they can debate it. But today's vote will say whether we should even begin to move to cover this, and we are getting it blocked. On last night's vote, six of our colleagues from the other side of the aisle joined us, but not enough.

And so here it is. This is not me speaking, this is the AP, almost universally regarded as a nonbiased news source: Republicans block Senate disaster aid bill.

What is going on? They don't block bridges and money for the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, to help rehabilitate those communities, and they are blocking this, for help in Missouri and Louisiana and New York and Vermont and the Missouri River Valley up through the Dakotas, the State of Missouri?

What is going on here? This has never been a partisan issue.

Republican Governors whose States have been hard hit have called for help. Chris Christie, hardly a wallflower, hardly someone who doesn't relish a partisan battle when he thinks it is right, but to his credit, when he thinks it is wrong:

> Our people are suffering now and they need support now. And they, Congress, can all go down there and get back to work and figure out the budget cuts later.

That is Governor Christie.

Governor Bob McDonnell, a well-known conservative:

> My concern is that we help people in need. I don't think it's the time to get into the deficit debate.

Are my colleagues on the other side of the aisle listening? Let us begin to debate this bill. Let us move forward, and let us fund FEMA fully. Let's not put something in the CR and say, Well, in a month from now we will debate it. We all know CRs get tied up. FEMA has run out of money now—now. So this vote will be a vote that determines whether we keep the American tradition of helping one another in a time of disaster here in America; and a vote no says, no, I don't want to do it. A vote no says I am not going to proceed to even debate the bill. A vote no is against the greatness of America, in my opinion, because we always have stood for helping people, being one Nation, under God, indivisible. When a part of the country desperately needs help, we all pull together to help them, knowing that if, God forbid, it happens to us down the road, the Nation will be there for us.

I was just at the 9/11 memorial service, the tenth anniversary. It was a time when we all pulled together. George Bush did not ask, when we were in the Oval Office and said New York desperately needed $20 billion, Is it a blue State? How are we going to pay for it? He stepped to the plate. He was a patriot and he said: This is what America must do.

That was a manmade disaster, an awful disaster. Far more lives were lost than now. But it is not a different issue. This is a disaster, and people are hurting and people need help. The attitude of President George Bush hopefully will be the attitude of our colleagues across the aisle, that they won't block the bill, that they won't find seven excuses, or say, We will give you a little of the money a month from now in a continuing resolution, when the money is desperately needed now.

In conclusion, this vote is a crucial vote that says: Are we the same American people we have always been, who look out for one another, who help one another in a time of need, regardless of party and regardless of bickering and everything else? This vote will determine it. I urge a strong bipartisan vote for the resolution that we will vote on in an hour.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I thank the Senator from New York for those very descriptive and moving comments about his State, and particularly the part of his State that we don't hear a lot about. That is why we depend on the Senators to speak the truth about what is going on and what they are seeing. I know the Senator from New Jersey is here to speak, but pictures are worth a thousand words and I wanted to put this chart up. I hope the cameras can grasp the horror of all four of these pictures. What is I think most telling about them is they are all from a different State in a different part of the country.

This picture is of Joplin, MO. I haven't myself personally been to Joplin, but before the year is out I will go, and I think other Senators should go see what has happened in one of the great tornado disasters in the history of our country.

This picture, which almost brings tears to my eyes because it looks exactly as Lake Pontchartrain looked in the city of New Orleans, I believe is from Irene, from North Carolina. It is heartbreaking. I am sure this is a family who was on the coast, and everything they had is destroyed. It really is quite moving.

This is a picture on the Mississippi River, I am not sure in what county. But when our Senators come to the floor to talk about rural areas and the devastation, at least in Missouri, you can walk down the street and find a neighbor whose home was equally destroyed and at least get a hug. Out here in these rural areas, you are by yourself. It could be miles between your house and your neighbor's home. You cannot even find the church where you worshipped together on Sunday.

Here is Texas. We prayed for the rain last week to go west to Texas. It hit Louisiana again. They are the ones who need it, but they cannot get it. There were 20,000 fires in Texas. There were thousands of homes burned up.

Before everybody starts to think, what is the great help—yes, FEMA is a great help. But let me put this in perspective. You get $2,000 a family—$2,000—to help buy a toothbrush, maybe a few pieces of clothing, some initial toiletries, et cetera, and you get $30,000 for some immediate needs. It is not as if we are trying to send people $1 million a house. How can people stand in the way of $2,000 for immediate needs and $30,000? If you had a house that was worth $150,000 and you ran a little printing business and you lost both, the most you could get out of this bill is $30,000. Do they think we are being too generous? It is minimum support. I want to make that clear—minimum support.

Some people are lucky enough to have insurance. If the insurance company steps up and does not try to pull out the fine print, as they did in Katrina, and come up with 100,000 excuses why they can't fund the homes, maybe they will get homes. This isn't us just trying to dump millions of dollars on people who do not deserve it.

That is what I wanted to say. I will have more to say, but I think these pictures speak 1,000 words. Again, FEMA is out of money. I don't want anybody coming here to vote to say: I didn't vote because FEMA has money. They are out of money. They are stopping projects all over the country because all they can basically do is have enough money to pay those immediate needs on the east coast. Joplin, MO, has been told: No, you have to wait. Louisiana, on the gulf coast, has been told: No, you have to wait. We are happy to wait a few weeks. We understand the dilemma. But this cannot go on week after week, month after month. We have to pass a bill for an entire year and not have to come back to it.

I see the Senator from New Jersey on the floor, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion of the Senator from Louisiana and her personal experience from Louisiana on the consequences of disaster. She speaks from firsthand knowledge and speaks for all of us in this respect.

I rise today because we as a nation have always come together to help each other in times of crisis without question, without politics. In my 20 years between the House and the Senate, I never questioned, in the midst of a disaster somewhere in the country—which, fortunately, for the most part has not been New Jersey—casting my vote to support those fellow Americans who found themselves in urgent need because of natural disasters having nothing to do with any control they had whatsoever.

This is not the time to politicize disaster aid. It is not who we are or what we expect this Nation to be. Our goal when disaster strikes is to unleash the full force of the Federal Government to help families in trouble and communities in ruin, not to score some political points by slowing relief and calling it responsible fiscal policy. In the wake of a storm, when the floodwaters rise, when the winds blow, when the storm surge rushes in, we should not be rallying our political base; we should be rallying the full force of emergency responders to help.

In the last few weeks, the east coast has suffered an earthquake, a hurricane, and some of the worst flooding my State has seen in years—a 100-year flood. I received a letter from a constituent in Moors Landing, in Monmouth County, who wrote:

> Dear Senator MENENDEZ,
>
> I live in Moors Landing, a development of homes in Howell Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Our community is in great need of assistance. One section of our community was devastated by flooding from an overflow of the Manasquan inlet on August 20 and 21. Homes and property were destroyed, and the families and lives of those homeowners were terribly disrupted.
>
> Then, after the first calamity, Hurricane Irene brought further destruction to this

same section of our community. But in addition to that repeated damage, Irene brought damage to a second section of our community.

Hurricane Irene, in addition to the added homes and property damage, forced many of our residents to be evacuated in order to avoid drowning in the rushing flood waters. This second catastrophe added to the misery and hardship suffered from our affected homeowners who lost their furniture, their carpets and flooring and everything in the first floor of their homes, their furnaces and air conditioning units, and all of them have to tear down their water damaged walls to avoid mold and dry out their homes.

All of this devastation and loss comes at a time when our people already are finding it difficult to make ends meet. These people have no money to take on the added costs of repair; and now there is no one who would even buy their homes. So they are stuck with a true nightmare scenario—no money to fix things and no way to sell the homes. We need your help. I understand Federal funding from FEMA is available, and we urgently need your assistance in securing these funds for our neighbors so that these people can move on with their lives.

That constituent, a fellow American, deserves to know that her government will be there to help, that relief is on the way, not held up in Congress to satisfy some ideology or political agenda.

When disaster strikes, Americans come together. We do not hesitate. We do not ask why. We do not wait. We rush to our neighbors and do all we can to help them rebuild. After the damage and flooding Irene caused, we came together as we always do—as a community, each of us working together to help others.

I had the opportunity to tour the flooded areas of New Jersey with the Army Corps of Engineers. Then we went to Patterson. This is a picture of Patterson, NJ, and these responders are on a boat, with the President and Governor Christie of my State, to assess that damage.

After 5 days of flooding, there were still those who were homeless, trying to put the pieces of their lives back together. As we flew over the area with the President that day, we could see mud lines on homes indicating how high the floodwaters had reached. Then, tragically, we saw home after home where everything, up and down some streets—all the personal belongings of residents had been put out as trash, cherished pieces of their lives lost, ruined.

Paterson was particularly hard hit. Ironically, the river that once fueled the economy of Paterson washed out bridges, dams along the river were badly damaged, and power was knocked out for days. With the latest rains, flooding again took place even after Hurricane Irene. So the water may have receded, but the consequences have not.

We have been very pleased with the Federal response so far, a response that should have nothing to do with politics, nothing to do with political budget debates in Washington, and everything to do with the real needs of families in Paterson, in Lincoln Park, in Wayne, and in so many other places in New Jersey and across this country. Some of these people have to start over, start their lives over.

FEMA, along with other Federal, State, and local officials, needs the resources necessary not only to move in as quickly as possible to deal with the crisis but the resources necessary to deal with the aftermath—politics notwithstanding—because when one community is in trouble, we are all in trouble, and we pull together.

Frankly, I cannot believe there are those in this Chamber and in the other body who see this as a political opportunity, those who would focus on the politics of relief even in the face of families who have watched their lives wash away, their property in ruins, and their communities devastated.

New Jersey suffered severe damages and left families, already struggling, with another challenge. It is up to all of us to help them. Irene was a powerful storm, but what we have learned is that there is nothing more powerful than what unites us as a community. It is in times such as these, when families and small businesses are trying to recover, that we appreciate the role of professional, well-equipped, well-trained local, State, and Federal boots on the ground.

In my view, one of the most legitimate and nondebatable roles of government—clearly, I have heard many of my colleagues refer to this in a different context—is the security of our people. If you are homeless as a result of a disaster, you have a security problem. In my view, one of the most legitimate and nondebatable roles of government is to provide a helping hand to a citizen when there is nowhere else to turn. Yes, we have to do all we can to keep our economy moving, create jobs, and reduce the deficit. We have to make cuts where we can. But in the face of disasters, we cannot say no to families who have lost everything. We cannot say no when floodwaters are rising, homes are lost, possessions are piled in the streets, and families are picking through the mud to put whatever pieces of their lives they can find together once again. We are not a nation that ties helping them recover to the politics of the moment. We are not a nation that leaves our neighbors alone in the time of tragedy. We do not stand down in times of crisis, we step up.

We in New Jersey are grateful to the President for coming to Paterson and to Wayne and for the rapid and effective response of FEMA and State and local officials, after Irene, to families who have lost so much. But any attempt to slow relief to these families is, in my view and in the view of Governor Christie of my State—any attempt to politicize this disaster to advance an ideology at the expense of all we stand for as a nation is not acceptable.

The President said we will do what is necessary to respond. Senator LAUTENBERG and I took the same view, and Governor Christie took the same view. We don't want to get into the politics of budget debates or whether this should be offset later on. That is a question for later on. The question right now for people who find themselves without a home so we can knock on that door is, Is the Federal Government—the one I pay my taxes to, the one I swear an oath of allegiance to every day—is it going to respond to me now?

I did not question the need to respond to tornadoes in Joplin, floods in the Dakotas, or the terrible consequences of the hurricane in Louisiana or any other place in this country, and I do not expect that my colleagues now will say no to their fellow Americans who need help now in New Jersey and in other States along the east coast. It is simply not the American way to not support the funds necessary and deal with the challenges these families have now.

Let's keep our eye on the ball. There are families in real need, really struggling in ways we cannot imagine. We have a real ability to put politics aside and do what is right. We will have that opportunity very shortly. Let's do what is right. Let's get this money to the Federal agencies that can help turn around these people's lives. That is the American way. That is the vote we will have later today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I thank the Senator from New Jersey for adding his strong and powerful voice to this. I wished to clarify a few points that I think are important for people to understand.

First, for those who might be engaging in or listening to this debate, we are going to have a vote in about an hour or so, and if we do not get 60 votes, we will likely not be able to replenish the FEMA coffers that are virtually empty. The Federal fiscal year, to remind everyone, does not start January 1. It starts October 1. We run on a fiscal year, not a calendar year. We are coming to the end of our year in September, this month. FEMA has run out of money in the last 11 days. I wish to submit for the RECORD—this is just an 11-day count, $387 million worth of projects that have been halted because FEMA is stretching the few dollars it has have left to cover the emergency needs, literally, of meals and shelter for the people on the east coast.

In other parts of the country where there are jobs underway, rebuilding highways, rebuilding libraries, rebuilding schools, rebuilding sewer systems, water systems, et cetera, those projects have been sent a pink slip, basically, from Washington saying cease and desist. You know what the worst thing about that is, it is not necessary if we would immediately act and refill this coffer so these projects can get started immediately. What is very bad about this pink slip is that this $387

million worth of projects, many of these projects have already been done by small businesses, private sector contractors. This is not money owed to the government. This is money, in large measure, owed to private small business people or medium-sized business people or, in some cases, large businesses that are in the process of fixing the library. In the last 11 days, because of some ideology here, some sort of political party agenda, they have received a pink slip that says: Stop work.

If these companies that have already purchased the lumber or purchased the concrete or purchased the pipe to build the project do not get paid soon, they will go bankrupt. Believe me, I have companies in my State that have gone bankrupt because the Federal Government is a notoriously late payer even under good conditions. This is not what I would describe as a good condition. This is a terrible condition. So the other side needs to think about the politics of this. This is not just a moral question, it is a business question.

There are many dimensions to this question. We have basically sent a cease-and-desist order to $387 million worth of contractors and businesses that might not be in New Jersey or affected in Vermont but are working on a project. They have a work order from the Federal Government, only to find out, sorry, Congress cannot decide how to pay, so good luck trying to make your payroll on Friday. This is wrong.

The second argument I would like to make to the other side when they are considering this important and significant vote is, when the other side says to me: Well, we need to budget for it, I would like to budget for it, but I do not have a crystal ball. I think I am a pretty good Senator, but one thing I do not do very well is predict the future. I sometimes have instincts about it, but I am not a fortune teller, and one would have to be a fortune teller to see what is happening.

This is not MARY LANDRIEU's opinion. These are the facts. In 2003, we needed less than $1 billion to fund all disasters. It was a relatively mild year. Had we put $2 billion in the budget, we would have had $1 billion extra. The next year it jumped to $5 billion. The next year it went up to $45 billion. It broke all records. The next year it went down to $12 billion. The next year it fell to $8 billion. How are we on the Appropriations Committee—DANNY INOUYE is a fabulous chairman from Hawaii and THAD COCHRAN is a terrific Senator from Mississippi, but neither THAD COCHRAN nor DANIEL INOUYE can predict a year and a half out what the disasters are going to be and budget accordingly.

Even if you can't motivate yourself—some people here—to vote for people because they need help, just look at the argument on the finances. We do not know in advance. We could set aside some money, maybe more than the $1.8 billion we have. I do not disagree there, but we still would have missed it every year except for 2 years. Even if we had put $5 billion in the base budget, we would have still missed it. We cannot predict it. Should we set aside $25 billion every year?

The point is, when disasters happen, just fund what we have committed to, which is a base benefit package to people. As I said, no one is going to get rich off $2,000 and $30,000 to help people get themselves started. Hopefully, their insurance comes in, nonprofits step up to help. They can maybe dig into a little bit of their savings.

This is as much a jobs bill, it is as much a business bill as it is a bill that is the right moral thing to do for people. It is not because Democrats do not know how to budget. I am so tired of being lectured on the other side about Democrats don't know how to budget. I would like to remind everyone the last time this budget was balanced, we had a Democratic President. Democrats can balance budgets. I was a State treasurer for 8 years, and I did a lot to help my State get back on a strong financial footing. I am proud of my record and so is every Democrat here. It is impossible to predict in advance.

What we could do is what we always do, send help. Help these companies and help these people get jobs, put people to work in America. Do the right thing. Over the course of the next 6 months, as our big committee is working and trying to figure out lots of big problems we have—and this is one of them—we can have time to sit down and figure out, based on this reality, what we should do. If anyone has a suggestion, please come to the floor now.

My committee has been talking about this for 6 months, and I wish to say thanks to my cochair, Senator COATS, who serves with me on the Homeland Security Appropriations Committee. We have been thinking about this for 6 months. He voted yes yesterday because he knows there are not many good options out there. Can we find a way? Yes. Can we find it this week? No. We might not even be able to find it in the next 30 days, but I am confident that over the course of the next month and year we will find a way to pay for it.

Right now people in New Jersey and Vermont and Louisiana and Missouri and Minnesota and North Dakota do not want to listen to this. They want to tell their kids: Yes, we are going to rebuild. They want to tell their employees: Yes, we are going to put our business back. They do not need to listen to this and they should not have to.

I am urging a strong vote at 4:15. Again, we have, in the last 11 days, $387 million in projects that have been stopped.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the summary of projects on hold due to the immediate needs financing decision as of September 9, 2011.

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

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS ON HOLD DUE TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS FINANCING DECISION AS OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

Alaska	$378,971
Alabama	7,378,107
Arkansas	3,659,364
Arizona	464,032
California	9,357,469
Connecticut	176,225
Florida	*65,879,997
Georgia	2,698,257
Guam	2,205,346
Hawaii	322,892
Iowa	*67,500,580
Illinois	2,930,339
Indiana	1,173,802
Kansas	1,596,523
Kentucky	3,405,166
Louisiana	*55,534,418
Massachusetts	256,659
Maine	73,640
Minnesota	7,334
Missouri	4,259,033
Mississippi	*69,992,729
Montana	4,093,487
North Carolina	92,517
North Dakota	*17,596,388
Nebraska	1,373,076
New Hampshire	129,251
New Jersey	1,293,220
New Mexico	88,333
New York	3,343,581
Ohio	286,364
Oklahoma	10,947,565
Oregon	8,831
Pennsylvania	577,858
Puerto Rico	1,952,676
Rhode Island	80,300
South Dakota	470,895
Tennessee	*37,277,063
Texas	5,153,160
Utah	765,107
Virgin Islands	220,229
Vermont	734,275
Washington	1,028,188
West Virginia	477,992
Total	$387,241,239

*Small business.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Every day this list is going to get bigger and bigger. All this is is a pink slip to someone unrelated to the current emergency. They are working on emergencies from 3 years ago and now they are being put out of work because of this bullheadedness that is coming from someplace. I hope we can break through on that today.

Again, these pictures are difficult to see, but I think it is worth seeing them again. This is what people look like who are listening to this debate—this family sitting on those steps. Someone, either they or their neighbor, is going to say: Did you hear Senator LANDRIEU on the floor? Did you hear the Senate debate? Why would the Senate of the United States be arguing whether we can get aid? Aren't we building in Afghanistan and Iraq and we are not going to build in North Carolina? I think they are sitting on the Outer Banks of North Carolina thinking: What is going on in the Congress? People are going to be angry, believe me.

I do not know what we are going to tell them. What are we going to tell them if we vote no on this? Are we going to tell them we do not have the money? Are we going to tell them we cannot figure out how to budget it?

We will figure it out later. We have to, eventually. Every bill we enter into

has to be paid for, eventually. You know that, Mr. President. We do not have to decide that this week.

Let's tell them yes. Let's do the right thing and let's get help to Joplin, MO. Let's get help to our rural communities that sometimes get very forgotten. Let's get help to our folks in North Carolina and to our people in Texas who have been suffering terribly over this, and let's do it now.

Let me share another quote that I think is particularly significant. The Senator from New York talked about Gov. Bob McDonald, a conservative Republican from Virginia. He said fund it now. Another Republican Governor, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said:

> Let's fund it now. It is not a Republican or Democratic issue.

I wish to read what Gov. Tom Ridge, the former Governor of Pennsylvania and the first Secretary of Homeland Security, a staunch Republican, said:

> Never in the history of the country have we worried about budget around emergency appropriations for natural disasters, and, frankly, in my view, we shouldn't be worried about it now. We are all in this as a country. And when Mother Nature devastates a community, we may need emergency appropriations and we ought to just deal with it and then deal with the fiscal issues later on.

He is a very influential leader in our country and was the first Secretary of Homeland Security. He ran the FEMA budget. He understands what is at stake.

Please, let's not make this a partisan issue. Let's get a strong bipartisan vote; the Senate can be very proud of that; and then we can negotiate the issues with the House. I will work with the House leadership to say there are several ways we can pay for this. We can debate it over the course of the next several months and maybe come up with a new way. I know one thing we cannot do is take it out of the Department of Homeland Security. Our budget would be devastated, and it wouldn't be fair to all the perimeters and the security and our ports and our firefighters to use their money to pay for past or present disasters. We could potentially find the money somewhere under some new mechanism, but let's not make the people of the east coast, the people of Joplin, MO, and the people of Louisiana, in the floods that we have just gone through ourselves, scapegoats. We will figure out there is time for debate later, but the time for action is now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I listened carefully to our colleague from Louisiana and note a particular distinction that her State brings; that is, the number of natural disaster problems that State has had and how diligently Senator LANDRIEU has fought to make sure that when we have a problem, we ask the government with a clear conscience to do its share in helping us cure the problem we get.

On Sunday just passed, we marked the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. On that terrible day, 10 years ago, we were reminded that when tragedy strikes one part of our country, Americans pull together to respond. When our enemies and Mother Nature sends us their worst, Americans are at our best.

In the wake of recent storms across the country, including Hurricane Irene in my State of New Jersey, we see this same American spirit of cooperation coming through. Unfortunately, we learned that the spirit of neighbor helping neighbor stops with our Republican colleagues. We saw a shameful display where all but a handful of Republican Senators voted to block consideration of an emergency disaster relief bill. They chose not to let our government do its share in curing a problem that enveloped much of the country. They have chosen to use disaster relief victims as pawns in their political gamesmanship.

Make no mistake. The disaster relief bill is a critical lifeline to the families who are struggling to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives after Hurricane Irene.

Early estimates suggest this violent storm could be 1 of the 10 costliest storms in U.S. history, with damages that exceed $10 billion. This is some of the worst flooding in a century, and it is a serious emergency.

Hurricane Irene produced devastating floods in New Jersey and other States along the east coast. A major tropical storm followed days later causing even more damage. In New Jersey alone at least 11 people were killed, and countless families were displaced after their homes were destroyed.

President Obama has declared the entire State of New Jersey—all 21 counties—a Federal disaster area. Earlier this month, the President came to New Jersey to see firsthand the destruction that Hurricane Irene has caused. I joined him on his tour of Paterson, NJ, my hometown, and one of the cities hit hardest by flooding. We witnessed unforgettable images. The streets and sidewalks were covered in mud, and inside homes—I saw it personally—mud covered the second floor of some. That is how deep the water was. Fourteen-foot crests followed what at times were very tepid streams. Walls were stained by high water marks. This picture shows some of the damage in the city of Paterson. Perhaps it is difficult to see, but what we are looking at is water—water everywhere—and it is entirely enveloping homes and businesses and the community.

Paterson is not alone. This is a scene in Boonton, NJ, where we see the road was washed away and people can't move from one part of the town to the other.

In Cranford, NJ, we see another disaster scene. Here we have what looks like debris piled up. This debris was furniture. It included beds, cribs, and refrigerators. It included all kinds of things—people putting their wares out on the front lawn, furniture never able to be used again, the houses themselves often not being able to be entered again.

This picture shows the damage in Bound Brook, NJ, and the high level of the water as it compares to the buildings constructed there. With Hurricane Irene, we witnessed nature's power to destroy. Now it is time to see the Federal Government's capacity to repair, rebuild, and restore.

Even before this hurricane struck, FEMA's primary source of funding for cleanup and recovery—the Disaster Relief Fund—was barely on life support. The tornadoes and flooding that wreaked havoc across our Midwest and South earlier this year, along with wildfires and other disasters, depleted the funds. That is why, in my role as vice chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I helped to craft a bill to replenish the Disaster Relief Fund.

The Appropriations Committee approved this bill last week, and majority leader HARRY REID understood the urgency of the situation and brought emergency disaster relief legislation to the floor right away for us to consider—putting money into the relief fund so we can deal with the tragedies that have hit so many people in so many places.

What happened in the Senate yesterday? Republicans filibustered our attempts. I think everybody across America has learned about what the word ''filibuster'' means. It means stopping things, blocking things. They blocked our attempts to even allow an emergency disaster relief bill to be considered. What kind of foul play is that? They talk about saving money, and they talk about cuts. It is outrageous.

Some of them have claimed the bill would cost too much. But we all know the widespread damage that occurred demands a strong Federal response. We have to provide FEMA with the resources it needs to help New Jersey's people, businesses, and communities recover and rebuild from this disaster.

This bill also helps disaster victims in all 50 States—not just the States affected by Hurricane Irene. Every State has experienced disaster in recent years, and FEMA is working in every State to help these communities rebuild and recover. So if we fail to pass this bill, every State is going to suffer because if we can't help one State, we can't help any States, and that is an unacceptable condition.

The fact is, the victims of Hurricane Irene and other recent disasters have enough to worry about. They shouldn't have to also wonder if their government is going to stand behind them.

I wish to be clear. The Federal Government plays a critical role in disaster relief efforts, and we have a responsibility to provide funding to help communities rebuild and to make sure the job gets done well.

For decades the Federal Government has had a track record of extending a helping hand to victims of natural disasters. This includes more than $11 billion in emergency funding to help Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, and other States recover from hurricanes or flooding in 2008. Last year we approved more than $5 billion in emergency funding to help States such as Tennessee and Kentucky recover from floods. The people in these States desperately needed our help, and Congress responded. We have to do the same now.

It is hard to understand why people on the Republican side in the House and in the Senate don't step up to their responsibilities. What are those responsibilities? Those responsibilities are to protect and secure the safety of our people. Without that, the country isn't quite what it should be by all measures. We have to do what we have to do, now.

As we fight our way out of a recession, this is no time to play politics and penalize people who are struggling. Moments such as this demand shared sacrifice. We face serious challenges in our country, but we cannot put a price on a human life and say, well, if it costs a lot over there, we are not going to do that to save people. Nothing is more important than keeping our families, our economy, and our communities safe.

So I call on my colleagues to put aside the Republican cloak, put aside the savings we think we can make from avoiding our responsibilities because no money is going to be saved. The costs are going to be there, and the misery is going to be extended.

So I urge us all to join to approve this bill. Few of us, if any, are exempt from the possibility of disaster in our States. So let's put the politics aside and make sure our first priority is helping people—helping individuals, helping families, helping the communities—and keeping functions going to permit our society to work.

With that, I close out my comments with wonderment as to what we have seen with the hard shell, heartless attitude about providing FEMA with the money to repair the results of disaster. It is almost incomprehensible. We heard a cry from one of the leaders on the Republican side in the House to say: Well, we first have to find the money to pay for it.

Like the Devil, we do. We don't do that when we see forests being ravaged by fire. We don't do it when we are attacked by outside enemies. We don't do it those times, and we ought not to do it now.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I join my colleague, Senator LAUTENBERG, and the others who have come to the Senate floor this afternoon to talk about the importance of getting help for people who have been hit by disasters.

A little more than 2 weeks ago, Tropical Storm Irene came barreling through New Hampshire just as she came barreling through Vermont and New York and New Jersey and North Carolina and so many other States along the east coast. The storm dumped as much as 8 inches of rain in parts of New Hampshire, and the damage to property and infrastructure, especially in the northern part of our State, was significant. The surging waters and high winds destroyed roads and bridges, damaged thousands of homes, left nearly 200,000 without power, devastated businesses, and ruined crops.

While the devastation was terrible, I wish to begin by commending those dedicated first responders and emergency personnel who kept our residents safe and well-informed throughout the storm. I am also grateful for the tireless work of road crews, utility workers, and volunteers from across New Hampshire who began helping families and communities rebuild just as soon as the storm passed. Their hard work and community spirit are deeply appreciated.

For many of the towns hit by Irene, this is the third major flooding event of the year. It is the 7th in the last 2 years. These have been devastating floods.

I have a picture of the town of Plymouth, a beautiful community in northern New Hampshire where Plymouth State University is. What we can barely see in this section of the picture is the new ice hockey arena for Plymouth State that was just completed about a year ago. It is a beautiful, state-of-the-art arena that, unfortunately, was flooded by these floodwaters. Of course, we can see other damage to the town.

Many of the homeowners in the community of Conway, on the other side of the State, are people who suffered some of the worst damage and are elderly and disabled. They are people who are living on fixed incomes, who are least able to recover from this kind of disaster.

Others affected by the disaster are families who are already struggling to cope with difficult economic circumstances. New Hampshire emergency response officials toured Conway today, and they talked to our office and told us about the plight of one young family of three. Sadly, the father was laid off from his job just 3 days before the storm hit, and his wife, who stays at home and takes care of their 3-year-old, doesn't have a job outside the home. So with his layoff, they have lost their entire income, and now their home is so damaged they are worried about being homeless. They have no money to rebuild. Without FEMA assistance, this family could indeed wind up homeless.

Hundreds in the West Lebanon area in the western part of the State across the river from Vermont may be out of work for months. Peg Howard, who owns a boutique gift store in the area, told the Upper Valley News, which is the newspaper that serves Lebanon, that she fears damage from Irene will put her out of business. As a small business owner, she has no parent corporation to help her recover, so assistance from FEMA and other Federal programs may be her only option as she tries to rebuild her business.

Peg and the hundreds of others in New Hampshire and the thousands across the country who have been devastated are taxpayers, and this is their government. They help pay for it. Their tax dollars help fund our government, including FEMA. They have the right to expect that FEMA will be there when they need help.

It is not only sad but it is an outrage that some Members of Congress would deny those people who have been so hard hit by Irene and so many other disasters this year—that Members of Congress would deny them help in their time of need, and for no good reason. The reason is pure partisan politics. It is plain and simple.

Even in the best of circumstances, the costs of Irene would be a significant burden for New Hampshire to shoulder alone. Thankfully, President Obama quickly granted Governor Lynch's request for a major disaster declaration. A number of Federal agencies, including FEMA, are now on the ground providing essential assistance as we begin to restore our State's homes, businesses, roads, and utilities.

But New Hampshire is hardly alone in the need for assistance after Hurricane Irene. Other parts of the country are still rebuilding from disasters earlier this year, such as the devastating tornado in Joplin, MO. Soon FEMA's disaster relief fund, as we have already heard this afternoon, which was already running low prior to the storm, will no longer have the resources needed to continue meeting recovery needs.

In the last 2 weeks, FEMA has spent $300 million providing relief to States hit by Hurricane Irene. Less than $500 million remains, which may not be enough to see us through the end of the month. New Hampshire, and the other States still recovering from disasters would be on their own if that happens. We cannot let that happen. We must act quickly to provide FEMA with the resources it needs to help our citizens and our towns recover.

In northern New England, we have a limited window to rebuild before the onset of winter brings our construction season to a stop. What is more, in New Hampshire, fall is a critical season for

our tourism industry, as thousands of visitors come to take in the beautiful fall foliage. We need to immediately rebuild the bridges Irene destroyed, such as this one in Hart's Location, pictured here. As you can see from this picture, in another couple of weeks, this beautiful mountain, as shown in the background, with all of the green foliage will be turning all sorts of colors because of the fall foliage. If we cannot fix this road and bridges in a number of other places in New Hampshire, we will not be able to have a tourist season that can bring people to the State that can help those people whose jobs depend on that tourism industry. Any delay in FEMA assistance over the next few weeks could have a serious effect on recovery efforts and the hundreds of businesses and their employees who depend on the tourism industry.

Mr. President, I know you agree with me and with the other Senators who have come to the floor this afternoon who believe that natural disasters should be beyond politics and beyond partisanship. The people hurting all across this country are not Democrats or Republicans or Independents. They are citizens. They are taxpayers. Getting them the help they need demands bipartisan cooperation. In the past, we have always been able to come together and get people the help they need. This time should be no different.

I urge all of my colleagues in the Senate to work together to address this emergency and provide FEMA the resources it needs to carry out its mission. This has an immediate, real impact on so many Americans and we cannot delay.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. 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.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I had to slip away from the floor for a few minutes, and I understand that no one from the other side has come down to speak this afternoon. I cannot say I blame them because it is a very tough position to take.

We are getting ready to take a very important vote in 5 minutes on whether we are going to provide disaster relief for the country, and particularly for the east coast, which has been so terribly hit with Hurricane Irene and then, of course, Tropical Storm Lee that came up through the gulf coast—and you know we have had our share of difficulty—but then it dumped additional rain in an area that was already saturated. We have wildfires raging in Texas. We have the destruction still in Joplin, MO, and other places throughout the Midwest.

The question for Americans in all of these States—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, and some who are totally unaffiliated with the political process—is: Is Congress going to help? Our answer today needs to be yes. We need to fill the FEMA coffers that are empty. Our fiscal year ends this month. FEMA was given a certain amount of money in the earlier part of this year. The end of the year is coming up, and they are virtually out of money.

I submitted for the RECORD only 30 minutes ago that in the last 11 days $387 million for ongoing construction projects for past disasters have been put on hold so FEMA can stretch those dollars to make sure people can eat in the shelters and at least have one set of clothes to wear in other parts of the country. This is unheard of in our Nation. We have never, ever gotten so low in our disaster account.

There is plenty of money in the account to rebuild Iraq. There is plenty of money in the account to rebuild Afghanistan. There is money in accounts for refugee camps all over the world. But the account for Americans who are homeless, desperate, and without their businesses, their churches and, in some cases, their neighborhoods is empty, and Members are going to come to the floor today and vote no? I strongly suggest a ''yes'' vote.

I said the reason we cannot budget exactly for these disasters is because we, A, do not know when they are going to happen, and we do not even know the amount of the damage. As I have shown in my arguments this afternoon, the amount wildly fluctuates. One year it was zero, over the last 10 years. One year it was zero. The next year it was $5 billion. One year it was $8 billion. The next year it was $43 billion.

So I am saying, no one here—we are all very good, very powerful people, but we are not fortune tellers, and we do not have crystal balls on our desk, so there is no way we can know.

When people say to me: Well, you don't know exactly, but could you budget something, the answer is, yes, we could figure that out, but we do not have to figure that out today. We do not even have to figure that out this month. We have this supercommittee set up to fix every problem in the world, it seems. We will just give them another one to work on because we have been working on this in the Appropriations Committee for some time. The White House is engaged. The Republican leadership, hopefully, will get engaged. The Democratic leadership is engaged. We will figure it out. But now is not the time to have the victims of these disasters and the survivors of these disasters worry about this.

We need to refill FEMA's coffers, refill the Corps of Engineers that are stretched beyond imagination at this time. You can imagine with the Mississippi River. The highest flooding in 50 years occurred this year. Now they have other flash floods all over the country—a bridge here, several bridges there, dams and dikes bursting. One of the Governors, I understand, just shut down a major bridge because they found a structural fault. So the Corps of Engineers has more than they can say grace over. Now is not the time to cut their budget. Now is the time to give them additional funding and do some reform of the Corps of Engineers that my people are crying for in Louisiana.

I think a picture is worth a thousand words. I know we are getting ready to vote, and the leader will come and, I guess, call for the vote. But a picture is worth a thousand words.

These are people who are desperate. I have shown this picture this afternoon. This is Joplin, MO. This is somewhere along the Mississippi River and the great flood. How lonely is this? At least in Joplin you could find a neighbor to talk to or a group of people who worshipped at a church, and you could pray together. This family is isolated, as others are in many rural communities. They need a yes from us this afternoon.

Here is Texas, and this breaks my heart. I think this is North Carolina. How sad are these pictures? They are real. Behind them are thousands of families and businesses.

In addition, if this argument of compassion doesn't move people, maybe the argument of flat business will move people. We are ready for the vote; I think the time has come. I urge my colleagues to please vote yes on this motion to proceed. If we get 60 votes, we can proceed to the disaster bill and figure out how to pay for it sometime in the next month ahead.

I thank the Chair.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 154, H.J. Res. 66, a joint resolution approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Barbara Boxer, Mark R. Warner, Jeff Bingaman, Daniel K. Inouye, Ben Nelson, Patty Murray, Frank R. Lautenberg, Daniel K. Akaka, John F. Kerry, Ron Wyden, Bill Nelson, Jeff Merkley, Sheldon Whitehouse, Max Baucus, Charles E. Schumer.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66, an act approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Democracy Act of 2003, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 61, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 132 Leg.]

YEAS—61

Akaka	Hagan	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Harkin	Pryor
Begich	Heller	Reed
Bennet	Hoeven	Reid
Bingaman	Inouye	Rockefeller
Blumenthal	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Blunt	Kerry	Schumer
Boxer	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Brown (MA)	Kohl	Snowe
Brown (OH)	Landrieu	Stabenow
Cantwell	Lautenberg	Tester
Cardin	Leahy	Toomey
Carper	Levin	Udall (CO)
Casey	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Collins	Manchin	Vitter
Conrad	McCaskill	Warner
Coons	Menendez	Webb
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Mikulski	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson (NE)	

NAYS—38

Alexander	Enzi	McCain
Ayotte	Graham	McConnell
Barrasso	Grassley	Moran
Boozman	Hatch	Murkowski
Burr	Hutchison	Paul
Chambliss	Inhofe	Portman
Coats	Isakson	Risch
Coburn	Johanns	Roberts
Cochran	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Corker	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Kyl	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Wicker
DeMint	Lugar	

NOT VOTING—1

Rubio

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. On this vote, the yeas are 61, the nays are 38. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion, upon reconsideration, is agreed to.

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

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

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. 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.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I understand that Senator CONRAD is on the schedule to speak in just a few minutes, but with his permission I just wanted to say thank you to the Members who voted favorably to move forward with the discussion about how to fund disaster relief and to provide this emergency funding.

The leader has laid down a very responsible $6.9 billion emergency bill for victims and survivors of the many disasters with which our country is struggling. These numbers were not pulled from the air. These numbers came through the appropriate appropriations committees. I think it is a solid amount to deal with the emergencies right before us for the next months and perhaps through the coming year. These numbers will be fine-tuned as we move forward. But it was a very powerful ''yes'' vote for thousands, tens of thousands of people who are waiting for us to say yes to move forward, filling the accounts that are now virtually empty, and giving a positive signal to Governors, both Republicans and Democrats; mayors, Republicans and Democrats; county commissioners, Republicans and Democrats, that help is on the way and that the Federal Government is not, and will not, turn its back on them at this time of need. So I thank the Members.

We had a strong vote, 61 votes. We needed 60; we got 61. But it was a strong vote, and I am glad we were joined by several Members from the other side, and I thank those who said yes to move this disaster relief forward.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I come to thank my colleagues as well for this strong vote to move forward on disaster relief. In almost every corner of America we have had unprecedented natural disasters this year, and my State has not been exempt.

I represent North Dakota, and we have had flooding unprecedented since records have been kept on the Souris River that goes through Minot, ND, the Missouri River that goes between Bismarck and Mandan, ND, the place where I come from. We have seen absolute devastation, water levels that changed virtually overnight. I can remember the forecast being raised 10 feet from Minot, ND, in a period of 48 hours, a higher water level than we have seen in over 100 years of recorded history. The same is true in the Missouri Valley Basin, with runoff the highest it has ever been. This has led to incredible flooding.

This is a picture from Minot, ND, where 11,000 people had to evacuate, 4,000 homes flooded. These are middle-class neighborhoods, and virtually no one had flood insurance. There were only 340 or 350 flood insurance contracts in this entire community of over 40,000 people because they had a Corps-certified levee protecting them that was supposed to be good for a 100-year flood. They had new dams that had been constructed in Canada and dams that had been enhanced in North Dakota. We hadn't had a major flood in 40 years.

FEMA is absolutely essential to helping these people get back on their feet. That funding is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Anybody who thinks we are going to get well on just FEMA funding does not understand the FEMA program. FEMA was designed to work in conjunction with insurance—homeowners insurance, flood insurance. But if there is a flood, homeowners insurance doesn't cover it. I can tell you, in a community that didn't have flood insurance—or almost no one did—if all they have is FEMA, it is important, it is essential, but it is not enough.

Nobody knows that better than the Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU.

I don't think in my entire time here I have ever seen anybody fight more doggedly, more persistently, or more effectively for their home State and their home community than MARY LANDRIEU did when they were hit with Katrina. MARY LANDRIEU is a hero because she would not take no for an answer.

I saw it time after time after time in the caucus, on the floor of the Senate, in committees. Do you know what. She delivered something that those people desperately needed. Good for her, and good for the people to have sent somebody here who would fight for them in their time of need.

Madam President, I am here representing a State at its time of need because we had thousands of people desperately affected—not as many as in the State of Louisiana; it is a much bigger population there. But in my State, when 11,000 people are evacuated in one town, that is a big deal. Eleven thousand people were forced out of their homes. They weren't just forced out overnight, they weren't just forced out over a weekend, they weren't just forced out over a couple of weeks, they have been out of their homes for months, and they are not getting back in their homes until sometime next year. Now, that is reality. Talk about a tough reality.

With FEMA they qualify for $30,000—and thank God for it because without it they would have nothing. That is it. That is it. These are people who have lost homes that were worth $150,000, $160,000, and they had a mortgage on them. What do they do? They are going to get $30,000. Do they rehab the home? Do they rebuild the home? What do they do? Thirty thousand dollars when a home has been underwater for 6 weeks, for 8 weeks, thousands of homes that had 10 feet of water in them for weeks and weeks and weeks?

When the water recedes, as it has done now, they are left with a pile of muck. I have been there. I have seen it, I have smelled it, and it is not a happy circumstance. These people deserve some additional help.

Do you know what we did in Louisiana? We passed emergency supplemental appropriations for CDBG. I predict if that is not done now in this disaster, these communities will have a difficult time ever recovering because with homeowners insurance, they are not going to collect on that in a flood. Very few people had flood insurance because they thought they were protected by the dams. They are left with $30,000 to recover. It doesn't add up.

We have to have additional CDBG funding because that is what was used

in the floods of North Dakota in the 1990s that helped us recover. That was what was used in Louisiana to help them recover. That is what is going to be needed here in cases where flooding occurred.

Here is the headline from the Minot Daily News: ''Projection: Devastation.'' When they were told the water level was rising as rapidly as it was, there was no time to defend the town.

They had levees that were supposed to be good for a 100-year flood, but Canada lost control of one of its major dams. Their provincial leadership told our Governor: The floodgates are wide open. We have lost control of the dam, and that wall of water is coming your way. That meant, in a short period of time the projections for the height of the water in Minot, ND, went up 10 feet in 48 hours. There is no way to raise miles and miles of levees 10 feet in 48 hours. That is humanly impossible.

What was the result? Everywhere you look, flooding. The Minot Daily News headline: ''It's a sad day''. Boy, it was a sad day. ''The crest could be 10 feet higher than June 1.''

In just a matter of days that wall of water was headed toward this community, and they had no time to raise their defenses. Here is the predictable result: That is Minot, ND, downtown. Water is everywhere—in every residential community in the valley, the business community. You can see, this water is not like the typical flood where the water comes and goes. Here, the water came and stayed and stayed for days and days and weeks and weeks and months. It wasn't until just recently that the floodwater receded.

This is a picture, again, from that community. In many cases all you can see are the rooftops.

Again, I want to say to those who might be listening because they need to understand, they need to understand: The FEMA assistance that we believe is now going to be on its way—in our case, some of it has already been received and we deeply appreciate it—it is not going to be enough. When someone has lost a $160,000 house, $30,000 is not going to touch the problem.

That is the reality, and the only way they are going to make meaningful inroads on that problem for people who didn't have flood insurance, through no fault of their own because they thought they were protected by new dams, by a levee—but, unfortunately, they faced something that has never been seen in history. It has never been seen in history. These are middle-class families, and they are devastated—there are over 4,000 homes destroyed in a community of 40,000 people.

If we don't get some additional help through additional funding for CDBG, those people's lives will be devastated. That is the reality. We did better for the people in Katrina. We did better for the people who were victims of the floods back in the 1990s because we passed emergency supplementals for CDBG to help people who were devastated, who needed a helping hand. We need to do it again.

I am pleased to say we have circulated a letter—and we have bipartisan signatures on it—to the leadership asking for CDBG funding on an emergency basis for the communities not just in my State but all across the country: the people in Joplin who were devastated by a tornado with wind speeds, I am told now, some of them up to 300 miles an hour; the people who have just been devastated by Irene; others who were affected by Lee; and others whom we can fairly anticipate will be hit as we go through the hurricane season.

We have seen natural disasters I think declared in all the States but two.

Yes, we need to replenish FEMA. We need to do it on an urgent basis. But we also need to add to CDBG funding so that people are not left devastated, with no chance to rebuild their lives.

I end with this headline: ''Swamped.'' That is what happened in Minot, ND. That is what happened in other cities in my State as well—Bismarck, Mandan, my hometown area, and many other communities. Of course, we have the ongoing situation in Devils Lake, ND, where the lake has gone up 30 feet in the last 17 years. That is now three times the size of the District of Columbia and is within 3 feet of going over. That will be a major calamity for all of eastern North Dakota if it is not prevented.

I implore my colleagues: Yes, let's replenish FEMA funds on an emergency basis. That is essential. But let's not stop there. Let's also provide meaningful funding for CDBG because without it, families will have a very difficult time ever recovering from these devastating blows.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

EMPLOYMENT IMPACT ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, last week the President addressed a joint session of Congress. He said he wanted to eliminate regulations—regulations, he said, that put ''unnecessary burden on businesses at a time when they can least afford it.'' We have heard this same message from the White House time and time again. The rhetoric coming out of this White House simply has not matched the reality. In fact, Washington continues to roll out redtape each day, and the redtape makes it harder and more expensive for the private sector to create jobs in this country.

The President also said that his administration has identified over 500 reforms to our regulatory system that would save ''billions of dollars over the next few years.'' I appreciate that the White House has identified wasteful regulations, but it will not really help our economy unless the White House repeals them. Since January, this White House has only repealed one single regulation, and it has to do, actually, with spilt milk. The President's new plan does nothing to fix the regulatory burdens faced by our job creators. It actually adds to the burdens of the job creators of this country.

The President has tried to justify this increasing avalanche of redtape. He said he doesn't want to ''choose between jobs and safety.'' In today's regulatory climate, that choice is a false choice. Washington's wasteful regulations are not keeping Americans safe from dangerous jobs. The American people cannot find jobs because no one is safe from the regulations coming out of Washington. For every step our economy tries to take forward, Washington's regulations continue to stand in the way.

Federal agencies' funding has increased 16 percent over the past 3 years while our economy has only grown 5 percent over these same 3 years. Washington's regulatory burden is literally growing three times faster than our own economy. This massive increase in Washington's power has only made the economy worse.

Americans know that regulating our economy makes it harder and more expensive for the private sector to create jobs. The combined cost of the new regulations being imposed by this administration just last month was over $9 billion. Much of this cost has been borne by America's energy producers and has cost American workers thousands of red, white, and blue jobs.

Those who try to justify these policies claim they will help us create green jobs at some unknown time in the future. Our economy, our job market, is not a seesaw. Pushing one part down doesn't make the other side pop up.

This administration's out-of-control regulation is persistently dragging down large portions of our economy. The President has promised to stop this kind of overreach. Remember, he issued an Executive order at the start of this year that was supposed to slow down Washington's regulation. So what has this administration done about it? In the 7 months since the President issued his Executive order, hundreds of new rules have been either enacted or proposed. For every day that goes by, our job creators face at least one new Washington rule to follow.

When the President announced his Executive order, he said he wanted to promote predictability and reduce uncertainty. These are laudable goals,

but a new rule every day does nothing to promote predictability and is the very definition of uncertainty.

The President talked about uncertainty just recently. The main source of uncertainty in the economy right now is Washington's regulations. Yet there was not a single sentence about regulations in the President's address just this week.

To make things worse, the people most victimized by this uncertainty are the very people the President claims he wants to help. The President said last year that when it comes to job creation, he wants to, as he said, ''start where most new jobs do—with small businesses.'' The sentiment is right, but, again, what has he done about it? According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, businesses with fewer than 20 employees incur regulatory costs that are 42 percent higher than larger businesses with up to 500 employees, and that is not counting the avalanche of new regulations that will come down the road. This year, over 50,000 pages of regulations have been added to the *Federal Register* already, and the chamber of commerce has said that the President's new health care law alone will produce ''30,000 pages of new health care regulations, many aimed at small employers.''

The President has said he will keep trying every new idea that works and listen to every good proposal, no matter which party comes up with it. I have a pretty simple idea. If the President wants to know which proposals will work to create jobs, maybe he should require his regulatory agencies to tell him how their own actions will affect the job market.

Congressman LEE TERRY of Nebraska and I have a bill that will do just that. It is called the Employment Impact Act, S. 1219. This bill will force Washington to look before it leaps when it comes to regulation that could hurt America's jobs. Under our bill, every regulatory agency would be required to prepare what is called a jobs impact statement, and this jobs impact statement would need to be prepared with every new rule that is proposed. The statement would include a detailed assessment of the jobs that would be lost or gained or sent overseas by any given rule coming out of Washington. It would consider whether new rules would have a bad impact on our job market in general. This jobs impact statement would also include an analysis of any alternative plans that might be better for the economy. Most importantly, it would require regulatory agencies to look at how new rules might interact with other proposals coming down the road.

The problem with our regulations is not only that they are too sweeping, it is also that there are too many of them, so it makes no sense to look at an individual rule in a vacuum and enacting hundreds of them without knowing their cumulative effect. The effect of all of these together could spell death by a thousand cuts for hardworking Americans who are trying to work and support their families.

Also in keeping with the principles of transparency, this bill would require every jobs impact statement prepared by a Federal agency to be made available to the public. The American people deserve to know what their government is actually doing, and Federal agencies in Washington need to learn to think before they act.

Requiring statements from these agencies on what their regulations will do is nothing new. For 40 years, the Federal Government has always required its bureaucrats to ask the question of whether their actions will impact America's environment. They have to file environmental impact statements. What I am asking for here is a jobs impact statement.

Past generations of legislators rightly recognized the importance of America's land, air, and water, but it is important that we recognize the importance of America's working families as well. America's greatest natural resource is the American people. We are talking about people who want to work, are willing to work, are looking for work, and yet cannot find a job. The Employment Impact Act will force Washington bureaucrats to realize Americans are much more interested in growing our Nation's economy than they are in growing our government.

I am going to continue to fight to see that the Employment Impact Act is passed and signed into law to help get Americans working again.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I wish to echo the comments made by my colleague from Wyoming regarding regulations. That is something I hear from small businesses all across South Dakota, traveling my State during the month of August. I toured businesses, and I visited with farmers and ranchers and small businesspeople. That was a recurring theme, one thing people continued to bring up unsolicited. When you asked them questions about what can be done to help create jobs, to get them investing and putting their capital to work, that was the overwhelming response. It came back literally every single time, that businesses are concerned about the overreaching regulations coming out of Washington, DC, and the economic uncertainty that it creates. Part of it just has to do with the predictability that businesses need to make long-term investment decisions. If they do not know what is going to happen next in Washington, DC, it makes it awfully hard for them to plan. So as a consequence of that, we see billions of dollars, trillions of dollars, sitting on the sidelines right now that could be invested and could be put to work, could be getting people back to work in this country.

Last week we all listened with great interest as the President came out to a joint session of Congress and made a speech about a jobs plan. He talked about passing this jobs plan. He has been traveling around the country making that same argument. What was interesting to me about that proposal—and, of course, the speech itself was sufficiently vague. It was very difficult to know exactly what was in that proposal, where more of those details now are coming to light. It sounded eerily similar to the very same proposal we voted on a couple of years ago in the Senate. It ultimately became law. It was called the stimulus bill. It had a pricetag of nearly $1 trillion.

The assertions made at the time were along the lines that if we passed this it would keep unemployment below 8 percent. We know employment is over 9 percent, and since that stimulus bill was passed we have lost 1.7 million jobs in our economy. There are 1.7 million fewer Americans employed today than there were when the stimulus bill passed a couple of years ago. So the question, then, is, Why would we want to go down that same path?

In many respects this proposal is like that one because it consists of more spending and more taxing and more borrowing—all the things we believe are detrimental to the economy in the long run. They do nothing to address the concern that was raised to me by the small businesses across South Dakota and the issue to which the Senator from Wyoming was just speaking; that is, the issue of overregulation that we keep hearing from our businesses across this country, the job creators in our economy.

It strikes me, if the President is serious about actually doing something that would create jobs in this country, it ought to involve putting policies in place that will be conducive toward long-term economic growth to provide the economic certainty these small businesses are asking for.

Right now there is uncertainty with regard to taxes. Tax rates are at least locked in now until the end of 2012, but beyond that it is anybody's guess. There is a concern, of course, that any proposal coming out of Washington right now that deals with deficit reduction might include higher taxes. That certainly is something the President put on the table yet again yesterday as a proposed way to pay for his new stimulus bill.

There is this repeated and consistent assault upon small businesses in the form of more regulations. The President backed off of the ozone regulations, which is something that everybody reacted very favorably toward in the business community and people I

talked to. But there are so many other regulations that are out there: the CO_2 emission regulation, appropriated dust regulation, the change in the classification for coal ash. There are all kinds of regulations—particularly out of the EPA, but not exclusively the EPA—coming out of agencies of this government that are creating greater uncertainty and making it more difficult and more costly for small businesses to create jobs. So why not focus on that issue? Why not focus on getting the free-trade agreements?

There were three free-trade agreements essentially negotiated in the previous administration. They are languishing because they have not been submitted to Congress for ratification. The President talks about free trade and creating jobs through exports. We had three free-trade agreements in 2006 and 2007. Colombia was 2006. Panama and Korea were June of 2007. The President said: I want Congress to approve these free-trade agreements.

We cannot do that until he submits them to the Congress. We would love to approve those free-trade agreements. It would mean thousands of jobs in this economy. We know that. It is low-hanging fruit. It is something we could do today that is something positive to actually create jobs in this country.

Just as an example, in my State of South Dakota in 2008, the top three crops were corn, wheat, and soybeans. In those three commodities we had 81 percent of the market in the country of Colombia. In 2010 that had dropped off to 19 percent. It is a major collapse in our market share in that country simply because we have not ratified this free-trade agreement, and in the interim we have had other countries that have moved in and filled the vacuum.

Most recently the Canadians, on August 15, I think, had their own bilateral trade agreement with Colombia. We may go down to zero market share if we do not act quickly to get the free-trade agreements approved. It is not a function of us wanting to do it; it is a function of the President submitting those agreements to Congress for ratification. We cannot vote on and ratify those trade agreements, put them into effect, and get them implemented absent the President of the United States sending them to Capitol Hill. That is something on which Republicans would love to work with the President.

We would also love to work with the President on a moratorium on regulations. I think it would make perfect sense, given what we know about what small businesses are telling us in terms of creating jobs and hiring people and investing capital, that regulation is a huge impediment to that. So why not—at least for the foreseeable future, until such time as we start getting this unemployment rate down and get people back to work—put a moratorium on all these crazy regulations coming out of Washington, DC?

There are literally millions of jobs that are impacted by these various regulations according to estimates that have been put forward by organizations such as the chamber of commerce and others. There are millions of jobs in this country impacted by the issue of regulation. I would think it would make perfect sense for this President to say to us, as part of his jobs package, his jobs plan: We want to work with you to put a moratorium on regulations for a 2-year period, until the end of his term in office—whatever that period is—but at least some amount of time so businesses know with some certainty that if they invest their dollars, they are not going to be slapped with some new regulation coming out of Washington, DC.

There was a story just this morning about 500 jobs lost in the State of Texas over a new EPA regulation. We have seen examples of that in my State of South Dakota. We have had coal-fired powerplants that have been nixed simply because of this uncertainty that has been created by regulations coming from Washington, DC. That is something that Republicans on Capitol Hill—if the President wants to be proactive in terms of job creation and actually having a forward-looking proposal and plan for job creation, he would certainly get cooperation from lots of folks on our side of the aisle when it comes to the issue of regulations.

Another thing we would be more than happy to work with the President on is broad-based and comprehensive tax reform. We all talk about it, and nobody seems to be willing, at least from the President's perspective, to put forward a proposal that would actually broaden the tax base in this country, lower the rates on businesses and individuals. I think it would lead to an enormous amount of economic growth. Most people and businesses I talk to suggest that right now in America the complexity in the Tax Code, the rates in our Tax Code, make us anticompetitive.

We lose jobs every single day to other countries around the world that have lower tax rates. Businesses are taking their capital and investing it overseas, creating jobs overseas, and are opposed to putting it in our country because our rates are not competitive. Our corporate tax rate at 35 percent is the second highest in the world. We are second only to Japan, and they were going to lower theirs prior to the tsunami.

The fact is, we have tax rates in America today that are making it very difficult for our businesses to compete and to keep those jobs and keep that investment in this country.

What can we do about that? Well, if we had broad-based tax reductions on individuals and small businesses in this country, lowered taxes on investment, I think we would see an explosion of economic growth and get these businesses—provided that there is enough certainty associated with that. In other words, we don't do it for a short period of time, we do it for a long period of time. If we do that, we will see businesses pick up on that signal from Washington, DC, and begin to invest again and get a rate structure that is competitive with other countries around the world.

Tax reform regulations, regulatory reform, a moratorium on regulations, trade, those are all issues that we are more than willing to work with this President on if he is willing to work with us because those are policies proven over time that actually will create jobs. Again, they are the things we consistently hear.

I dare to say that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are hearing the same thing I am hearing. I hear it from colleagues on my side who are repeatedly visited by small businesses in their travels in their individual States, and when they go to make contact with their small businesses they hear this over and over. These are the issues the American business communities are saying we need to address to get people back to work in this country.

I am certainly hopeful the President will change directions away from what he is proposing to do now, which is a very similar path to what was done 2 years ago, which we all know has been unsuccessful. If we look at it based upon the metrics—and, again, I am talking about job creation. If we look at it based upon the employment rate, the unemployment rate has gone up. The number of jobs lost has gone up. The amount of our debt has gone up by $4 trillion. We have borrowed more, we are spending more, and we are getting nothing in return—in fact, the very opposite of what we hope to get; that is, job creation. That approach has not worked.

Let's not double down on that and go back and try the same failed policies again. Let's change direction. Let's go in a different direction for this country, and I would hope the President would do that.

The other thing that I think is particularly troubling about his proposal—not to mention some of the things that he put out in his speech last week that give me a good amount of heartburn in terms of the direction he is headed—is how he proposes to pay for that. It was indicated yesterday that 90 percent of the cost of this stimulus bill would be paid for by allowing or preventing people from taking deductions—the two top income tax rates in this country and the people who are in those income tax brackets, to be able to claim deductions on their tax returns.

Well, that impacts millions of Americans and millions of job creators, millions of small businesses, not to mention a lot of charities. Many of the people who contribute to charities today don't do it simply because of the tax consequence, but the amount they contribute to a charity is affected by the Tax Code, and reducing the amount they can deduct is going to make it more difficult for many of our charitable organizations that rely upon the

generosity of people. In many cases these are high-income people in this country.

That being said, raising taxes, in my view, is not the way to pay for a new stimulus, a stimulus 2.0, an approach that has been tried and failed. It is something we should not be moving toward, but moving away from, and moving in a different direction.

Again, we have no greater priority in America today than getting this economy growing, creating jobs, getting people back to work. That helps bring in more revenue in the Federal Government and helps deal with our issue of the deficit and the debt. There are two ways we can deal with that: We can reduce spending, and we can grow the economy. We have to do both.

Certainly, those are not unrelated. When we reduce spending, that is essential to growing the economy. We also have to put policies in place that will grow the economy and create jobs. Raising taxes is not the way to do that, and so the President's proposal to pay for his new stimulus bill which raises taxes on people is a wrongheaded approach that has not worked in the past. It will not work in the future. We need to try a different direction.

Republicans are willing, ready, and able to work with this President on passing trade agreements that have been languishing around here, literally, for 4 to 5 years; on reducing the overreaching regulations, which are creating economic uncertainty for our small businesses across this country; and on tax reform that would lower rates and broaden the tax base and bring in an incredible explosion of economic growth and jobs.

Those are the types of things we ought to be looking at—long-term policies that will affect in a positive way the environment, the atmosphere for our job creators, not doing another Washington-directed spending program that has already demonstrated that it doesn't work.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SYRIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the world has witnessed considerable upheaval across the Middle East this year as citizens from all walks of life have turned out by the millions to say enough to repressive regimes, stagnant political systems, and a lack of economic opportunities.

In fact, we should probably look back to the summer of 2009 when thousands upon thousands of ordinary Iranians bravely took to the streets to peacefully protest the country's likely stolen election.

These Iranian citizens were met with brutal violence, death, detention, and unspeakable torture.

While Iran's ruling dictatorship was able to temporarily repress the public aspirations of its own people, the seeds for wider public discontent were taking root through much of the region.

First, in Tunisia we saw peaceful protests lead to the ousting of corrupt, long-time strongman President Ben Ali.

Next, Egyptian President Mubarak resigned following sustained peaceful protests in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt.

And certainly Muammar Qaddafi's reign of erratic and despotic rule is nearing an end.

Other popular calls for political and economic reform from Bahrain to Yemen remain in flux.

And as we saw this weekend with the violent and very troubling protests breaching the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, ousting a repressive regime is only one step on a long road toward building effective long-term democratic and economic institutions.

The United States stands ready to support these peaceful transitions, but most of the hard work must continue to come from within—from the people who made such historic change possible in the first place.

Amid so much upheaval and potential hope, it is critically important that we also keep our attention on what is happening in another very important country in the Middle East—Syria.

Since March, millions of protesters have peacefully taken to the streets of towns and villages across Syria demanding an end to the brutal dictatorship of the Assad family.

The Syrian people have suffered 40 years of economic hardship, political repression, and corruption under the Assad family—first under former President Hafez al-Assad and now under his son, Bashar al-Assad.

Let me give an example of life under the Assad regimes.

Almost 30 years ago, then-President Hafez al-Assad ruthlessly leveled a Portion of the town of Hama to put down a rebellion by his own people.

Between 10,000 and 20,000 fellow Syrians were literally buried to death in the ruble.

This is how political dissent was dealt with in Syria.

And what has been his son's strategy for addressing public demands for change while reform is sweeping the rest of the region?

Tragically, the same as his father—mass murder.

Since the popular uprising began, an estimated 2,000 people have already been slaughtered by Assad's security services.

Government snipers on rooftops have fired on those who dare to go outside in areas where protesters are active. Men have been rounded up and detained in nighttime house-to-house raids. Tanks and anti-aircraft guns have been used against civilians and civilian buildings.

A recent example—sadly one that is not at all unique—obviously shows that the current Assad regime has no sense of history.

Last month government troops backed by tanks, armored vehicles, and snipers entered the heart of Hama—the same town of Hama that had been flattened by Assad's father three decades earlier—to quash antigovernment protesters.

Our dedicated U.S. Ambassador Robert Ford had gone to Hama not long before the siege to serve as witness to the unfolding events.

I wish to show this photo, which shows a giant Syrian flag held by the crowd during a protest against President Assad in the city of Hama on July 29.

The town—already under siege for days—saw its telephone, water, and electricity cut off at 5 a.m. as a prelude to the deployment.

Residents tried to stop the advancing armored columns with barricades—many of them built of furniture, iron railing, rocks, and cinderblocks—but stood little chance.

Dozens were killed and hundreds wounded.

Such public resilience and government brutality have continued unabated in Syria for months.

President Assad's tyrannical actions have been condemned around the world. The Arab League, not always known for its democratic advocacy, has urged Syria to ''end the spilling of blood and follow the way of reason before it is too late.''

Syria's neighbor and significant trading partner Turkey has spoken out. Turkish President Gul said he has ''lost confidence'' in the Syrian government. Prime Minister Erdogan has said, ''Turkey can no longer defend Syria.''

British Prime Minister Cameron, French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel jointly issued a statement urging Assad to ''face the reality of the complete rejection of his regime by the Syrian people and to step aside in the best interests of Syria and the unity of its people.''

The United Nations human rights office in Geneva has issued a sweeping report concluding that the Syrian government might have committed crimes against humanity through summary executions, torture, and by harming children.

President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have sharply criticized the Syrian government's crackdown from the start, and most recently the Administration announced additional sanctions against the regime, including those squeezing Assad's cash lifeline from petroleum exports. The European Union also cut its purchase of Syrian petroleum.

Senators GILLIBRAND and LIEBERMAN have introduced legislation—legislation I am pleased to support—that further tightens sanctions against Syria's

petroleum exports by penalizing those who buy Syrian oil or invest in its energy sector—an approach Congress has supported in the past against Iran.

I urge others to support this legislation and for the Congress to pass it expeditiously.

And when the crackdown in Syria began, I joined Senators LIEBERMAN, MCCAIN, CARDIN, KYL and at least 20 others on a Senate resolution condemning the violence. I understand that Senator PAUL has had a hold on that resolution for a number of months. I call on Senator PAUL to work with us on his concerns in a timely manner so we can move forward putting the Senate on record about these tragic events in Syria.

There is more still the international community can do.

Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa are still blocking a United Nations Security Council resolution that could impose more sweeping international sanctions on Syria. That some of these countries have emerged from decades under their own repressive regimes, only to sit silently as Assad slaughters his own people is extremely troubling.

Russia and China should also pledge not to purchase any surplus Syrian oil which is used by Assad to pay off his enablers and security henchmen.

Human rights monitors, humanitarian workers, and journalists must be allowed in the country.

And the International Criminal Court should look into indicting President Assad on war crimes.

This administration has shown great skill and diplomacy in navigating the turbulent calls for change in the Middle East.

These are demands from everyday people for a better life, for a chance to freely choose one's government, and to see hope and dignity for one's children.

The people of Syria should know that the rest of the world is watching and supporting their aspirations for freedom.

Saturday night in a suburb of Chicago I had a meeting with about 30 Syrian Americans, and we spoke at great length about the situation in the country of their birth. Many of them still have relatives, family, and friends, in Syria, and they are following on YouTube and through the international media the events of the day. They showed me on one of the computers nearby some of the YouTube footage which showed the Syrian security forces literally shooting a man dead, point blank. You could see him lying in the street, and you could see the blood flowing from his body.

To suggest that these peaceful protesters are anything else is to misstate the obvious. These people, by and large, in the streets of Syria are asking for the same thing that was asked for across the Middle East. They are asking for a chance for reform, for change, for self rule.

I promised my friends and people I represent in Illinois who have such strong feelings about Syria that I would do my best when I returned to Washington this week. This floor statement is just the beginning.

A few moments ago, I got off the telephone, having had a phone conversation with Ambassador Ford, who is in Damascus. He has done an exceptional job for our country. He has risked his life to let those who are protesting peacefully know that the United States is in their corner. We talked about the situation on the ground. He is a man of great talent and experience in the Middle East, and he analyzed all the different forces at work.

We know that Iran is, in fact, the major supporter and promoter of Assad and his repressive regime. We know, as well, that these five countries in the United Nations—Russia, India, China, Brazil, and South Africa—are stopping the United Nations action when it comes to Syria. I find it hard to imagine how some of these countries, in light of their own history, could ignore the obvious: the killing of innocent people in the streets of Syria. It cannot be tolerated, should not be condoned, and should not be protected by their veto in the United Nations.

I am going to work with President Obama and this administration and my friends in Congress on both sides of the aisle to let the people of Syria know that what is happening there has not been ignored by the U.S. Congress. I hope Senator RAND PAUL of Kentucky will at least lift his hold on bipartisan legislation which we have pending here which will express that sentiment in the strongest of terms.

The people of Syria deserve that message, to know that the people of the United States, through their elected representatives in the Senate, understand their plight, stand behind them, and will work to bring justice to their country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to 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.

SOUTH BOSTON VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I rise to express my congratulations and best wishes to the people of South Boston, MA, as they honor their community's long tradition of service to country on the 30th anniversary of the South Boston Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Thirty years ago, on September 13, 1981, the people of South Boston, led by their own citizens who had served in the Vietnam war, became one of the first communities in the United States to build and dedicate a permanent memorial in honor of those who had given their lives in Vietnam. I was privileged to be a speaker at the original dedication of the memorial, and I am honored to be returning to South Boston this year in order to once again pay tribute to those who served.

It is difficult for many of the generation that followed us to understand how bitterly our country had been divided by that war and how long it took to overcome if not resolve the divisions, often along class lines, that were left in its wake. I do not seek to reopen those wounds today, but it should not be forgotten that 25 young men from this solidly working-class community gave their lives in Vietnam, while Harvard College, located nearby on the far banks of the River Charles, lost a total of 12 out of the 11 classes from 1962 to 1972.

In building this memorial, the people of South Boston took it upon themselves to honor their own, and in so doing they reignited the spirit of service to country, not only here in Boston but elsewhere across our country. It was built through the dedication of friends and neighbors, acting together to honor and remember the service and sacrifice of those they knew and loved.

Many veterans from this community took strong roles in bringing the memorial to fruition, but I would like to extend a special recognition to Tommy Lyons, a Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, who not only provided spirited and determined leadership on this Memorial but also went on to found the Semper Fidelis Society in Boston, which every November brings together more than 1,000 marines of all ages and wars for the most well-attended veterans' lunch in America.

Mr. President, 25 names are engraved on the South Boston memorial—all of them ''Southie Boys,'' 15 of them marines, 9 soldiers, 1 airman. One of them was a lieutenant; the other 24 were enlisted men. All of them represent the best of citizen service, the willingness to put one's life on the line on behalf of our country.

In closing, I ask that the names of those inscribed on the memorial be printed below:

Joseph J. Agri, USMC
Charles A. Bazzinotti, USA
Richard J. Borovick, USA
John C. Calhoun, USMC
John H. Cole, USMC
Paul M. Daley, USA
Ronald L. Delverde, USMC
Joseph F. Desmond, USMC
Joseph W. Dunn, USMC
Devon M. Enman, USA
Gene D. Grover, USMC
Frank C. Hubicsak, USA