

couldn't get that bill to the floor. So Speaker BOEHNER once again decided to forgo the Hastert rule. That is how they got the Sandy emergency aid bill passed. Look again at the votes. Republican "yes" votes for the disaster bill, 49; Republican "no" votes for that bill, 179. That bill was dead on arrival under the Hastert rule. The Republican caucus couldn't support it, wouldn't support it, and we would be without any help now if they had followed the Hastert rule.

On the Democratic side, what was the vote on the Hurricane Sandy bill—192 "yes" votes to 1 "no" vote. The final count was 241 ayes, 180 nays. The bill passed, but about three-quarters of the support came from Democratic votes.

If the Speaker had imposed the Hastert rule, not only would we be off the fiscal cliff, but we would have failed at providing disaster relief for Hurricane Sandy. The only reason these critical pieces of legislation avoided the fate of the highway bill and of the farm bill is that the Speaker didn't follow the Hastert rule. He couldn't follow the Hastert rule because he wouldn't have been able to pass legislation. If his tea party caucus had forced America off the fiscal cliff, he knew there would have been hell to pay, so he waived the Hastert rule.

Now, of course, House Republicans are all in a fuss about having waived the Hastert rule. One tea party lawmaker admitted that the New Year's Day tax vote left a lot of his fellow Republicans with a very bad taste in their mouth. So it is probably back to Hastert rule business as usual on the House side, with death by tea party to any major bipartisan Senate legislation.

The tea party over on the House side wanted to vote for extreme things, such as voting to repeal or defund ObamaCare over 30 times—over 30 times—or voting to turn Medicare into a voucher program. If it is extreme enough, then they will vote for it. But those are actions which are not supported by the American people, and they can't pass the Senate.

For the regular business of government, for the regular business of passing Senate bipartisan legislation, the tea party-Hastert rule combination is deadly.

So back to where I began. If you are concerned about dysfunction in Congress, if you are wondering why we are less popular than a root canal, if you are wondering why 77 percent of Americans look at Congress and think we are actually doing more harm than good, and if you want an explanation of the dysfunction, take a look at the Hastert rule. If you look at this problem the way a doctor would look at a patient, the way an engineer would look at a system, the way a car mechanic would look at an automobile, and you look for what is broken, be specific; it is the application by the Speaker of the Hastert rule that prevents strong, bi-

partisan Senate legislation from going forward. When something moves, it is because the Hastert rule has been waived.

So if you want to see what is wrong, that quest takes you straight to the House of Representatives, and there it leads you straight to the House Republican conference, and there it leads you to that toxic combination of the tea party and the Hastert rule.

When you understand the problem, the cure is obvious: The House should ditch the Hastert rule. Call things up for a vote. Let everybody's vote count. Don't refuse to proceed unless only your own party will let you. It is the obvious and only solution. The fiscal cliff bill and the Sandy bill and the votes on those bills prove it.

With those tea party extremists dominating the House Republican conference and ready to pitch the country over the fiscal cliff and leave hurricane victims high and dry, the Speaker had to ditch the Hastert rule. The only way the House can do bipartisan business on major issues is to ditch the Hastert rule.

As we saw, the Senate has its problems, but we are actually doing OK, just as our legislative record shows. Over and over, we pass real, significant, bipartisan legislation after a real process on the floor of argument and amendment. As the House's legislative record shows, the problem is over there. More precisely, the problem is within the House Republican conference. Still more precisely, again, the problem is that toxic combination of the tea party and the Hastert rule.

If we want Congress to function effectively, if we want to succeed at doing the work of the American people, such as the fiscal cliff bill and the hurricane relief bill, and if we don't want to see more important legislation, such as highway bills and farm bills, fail in the House, unable to pass in the House, blocked in the House, the solution for the problem is clear: We have to ditch the Hastert rule and let the House as a body work its will, just as the American people elected it to do.

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 6:30 p.m. today and that all provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

(The remarks of Mr. CHAMBLISS pertaining to the introduction of S. 122 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

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

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

#### SANDY DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to encourage the Senate to seek quick action on the Sandy relief package that has been long overdue. I know the majority leader is committed to bringing it to the floor as soon as we can get some type of agreement with the other side of the aisle, and I hope that agreement can come quickly because a recovery that is delayed—as this has already been significantly delayed—is a recovery that very likely can fail.

We cannot afford for one of the biggest engines of the national economy, which is the Northeast, to fail in its recovery. This is not only for the sake of the Northeast but for the entire country.

I appreciate the majority leader's steadfast commitment to provide that relief as quickly as possible here in the Senate, but time is a-wasting. It is already Wednesday, and I am concerned we will lose another week before we, in fact, seek passage and then go to the President. From there, it would move on so the resources could begin to flow to communities across the Northeast that have languished since Sandy took its toll.

There is no excuse for delay. We already had the delay in the House. They could have passed the package the Senate passed in a transparent process that had the Appropriations Committee—on both sides—scrubbing the bill. It was brought before the Senate in a fashion in which we like to see the Senate work. I believe there were 25-some-odd amendments that were considered, a full vetting of the legislation, and there was a strong bipartisan vote at the end of that process. It was then sent to the House, and unfortunately it languished and died at the end of the last Congress.

Now the House has acted in a different fashion. So I am happy at this point to accept the House's version—even though I do believe the Senate version is superior in a variety of ways—so it can be sent to the President. Getting relief to the citizens in the Northeast is critically important.

I look at the package the House has, and I say to myself that \$50.7 billion in resources, in addition to the flood insurance package that has already passed, will allow our residents and small businesses that have been waiting so long to recover and begin to rebuild. Finally, it will show them that they have a strong partner in the Federal Government and that someone is there for them, as we have been whenever and wherever disaster has struck