

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF THE I-75 COLLISION NEAR GAINESVILLE, FL

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to join my colleague, Senator CASSIDY, to talk about the unspeakable tragedy that happened last Thursday near Gainesville, FL, when a large tractor-trailer crashed into a car, crossed into oncoming traffic, and struck a church van that was bound for Disney World.

I wish I understood why bad things happen to good people. There were five kids—five youngsters—from Marksville, LA, who lost their lives in that terrible collision. They were Joel Cloud and Jeremiah Warren, both 14 years old; Cara Descant, aged 13; Brianna Descant, aged 10; and Cierra Bordelon, aged 9. These five youngsters were members of the United Pentecostal Church in Marksville, LA. They were five beautiful lives, full of potential, who were gone before their time. It is heartbreaking, and there are, simply, no words.

I will say it again. I wish I understood why bad things happen to good people. I can't imagine any greater suffering than a parent's being asked to bury a child. The love of a child is not like the love for a parent or a spouse or a sibling. That is deep love. Yet, as my late father used to tell me, "Son, you will never, ever understand love until you have a child." I can't think of any greater suffering than to ask a parent to bury his or her child.

I want to tell each of these kids' families, the United Pentecostal Church in Marksville, the whole community in Marksville, and the Avoyelles Parish that the entire State of Louisiana grieves with you and that you are in our prayers.

The Marksville van was carrying some very precious cargo. In total, there were 12 passengers: 3 women—one of whom is pregnant—and 9 children. There were survivors—thank you, Lord—but many of the survivors were gravely injured, and I pray that they all have a swift and full recovery.

I want to express my sympathies to the families of the two drivers who died in that accident. I also thank the first responders who put themselves at risk every day to try to save lives during these catastrophes.

There are no words to describe this tragic accident. It happened far too close to the holidays, but there is never

a good time. I am going to say it again. If I make it to Heaven, the first question I am going to ask is, Why do bad things happen to good people? For now, I just pray that these families will find the strength they need to go on and that all the injured are healed quickly.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KAINÉ. Mr. President, I rise, together with a number of colleagues who will follow me tonight, to talk about the need to end the Trump shutdown and to reopen the government of the greatest Nation on Earth. I am glad to have so many colleagues here who each will share the stories that have been experienced by folks living in our States regarding a shutdown that has now gone on for 18 days and will soon become the longest shutdown in the history of the U.S. Government.

The shutdown is unnecessary, the shutdown is embarrassing, and the shutdown is painful. It is unnecessary. Why punish American workers? Why punish American citizens? No patriotic leader in their right mind would want to do that.

The thing that is so troubling about this shutdown is that the overwhelming majority of people who are affected are not connected to the dispute between Congress and the President over immigration reform and border security. Why should that dispute lead to farmers not being able to reach their extension agents? Why should that dispute lead to small businesses not getting their small business loan applications processed? Why should a dispute about immigration block the courts of DC from issuing marriage licenses to people?

The President praying for, urging, and then being proud of a shutdown is hurting all kinds of people who are completely unconnected with the issue in dispute between Congress and the President. In that sense, it is unnecessary.

Second, it is unnecessary because there are bills on the floor right now that would solve this—bills that are bipartisan, bills that were supported by the Presiding Officer and other Republican colleagues in the Chamber just a few weeks ago. If we took action right now, we could stop the punishment. We could end the pain—the gratuitous pain—that is affecting American families and workers.

The shutdown is unnecessary. The shutdown is embarrassing. This is the United States of America. This is the greatest Nation on Earth. The fact that we are in an 18-day shutdown of critical components of our government,

where people are not getting paychecks and citizens are not being served, is beneath what we should aspire to as Americans and certainly as U.S. Senators.

Finally, before I yield to my colleague from New Hampshire, the shutdown is painful. There are statistics about the numbers affected during the shutdown. Others may get into the statistics; I just want to share stories because Virginians are reaching out to Senator WARNER and me and sharing their stories with us.

Allen is a veteran and a Federal civil servant in Yorktown, VA. He has been working without pay since the shutdown began. He wrote to our office saying that his emergency savings are exhausted, he is behind on his bills, and the situation will not get any better as long as his Agency is unfunded. I will repeat that. Allen is a veteran who voluntarily served the military, this country, and this is how this President is treating him.

Joanna is from Woodbridge, VA. She wrote to me saying that she doesn't know what she will do if she doesn't get paid by the end of the month, as her family "can't afford to miss a single paycheck." She writes that "even a slight decrease" in her pay means her family cannot afford their rent.

A family from Culpeper wrote to me wondering how they will feed their children and pay their mortgage without being paid for their service to our government. They say that if this shutdown goes on for a month or more, they will have to worry about losing their home.

Michael and Chris, two Federal employees in Annandale, have three kids, two in college. They are going to have to miss their kids' tuition payments that are due for the semester this month. If the shutdown continues, they are not sure whether they will be able to make their mortgage payment.

James is a furloughed Federal employee from Fredericksburg. He says he is the "sole breadwinner" for his family. He tells me a shutdown that goes into months would spell financial ruin for his family and others.

A Virginian from Haymarket wrote me and told me that her loved one is a Federal employee who is working without pay. She had to postpone a necessary medical procedure because their family could no longer cover the costs of copays for testing and surgery.

Teresa is a Federal employee from Springfield. She is worried about paying her mortgage, utilities, food and more, but most of all, she is worried about the health of her son, Tommy. Tommy has a disability. She writes: Because of his medical fragility, Tommy must have numerous prescription medications; therefore, there are copays to pay. Missing a single dose could land him in the ICU. President Trump needs to stop holding Federal employees hostage. When I start missing paychecks, Tommy is possibly jeopardized in his own life.