

Mr. President, we had a disaster supplemental sent up by the White House before we had this 2-week break. I hope very much that the first order of business here will be that disaster supplemental. We ought to move that legislation and move it now. There is assistance in that legislation for some areas that have already been hard hit. There is further assistance for those that have been hard hit since that disaster bill was sent up here.

So I would ask respectfully of the leadership to get that disaster supplemental to the floor as quickly as possible. These are situations that cannot wait. These people need help. They need it now. North Dakota has been first in line to help out others when they faced disasters, and we have been happy to do so.

Mr. President, we are now faced with a staggering disaster and we need help. We are asking for it now.

Mr. President, I see there are other Senators wishing to speak. Will we be able to continue?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired, and it would take unanimous consent for the Senate to continue.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask for 1 minute more.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, in addition to the disaster supplemental, I think we should also ask, "Where is the budget?" Because the budget contains items that are going to be critically important to dealing with these disasters as well. The budget was supposed to have come out of the Budget Committee by April 1. That deadline has been missed. The full Senate is supposed to act by April 15. I hope we don't miss that deadline as well, because this Congress is developing a reputation of failing to act.

Mr. President, finally, there is a third matter. That is the chemical weapons treaty. We have a deadline of April 29. That is when it goes into effect. Where is that piece of legislation?

Mr. President, I say to my colleagues that there are three pieces of business that we ought to do and do quickly.

The disaster supplemental ought to be first in line.

Second, the budget: We have a deadline of April 15.

Third, the chemical weapons treaty: We have a deadline of April 29.

All three of those ought to be taken up, taken up quickly, and passed so the people of this country know that this Congress is doing its business.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

Mr. JOHNSON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Chair could interrupt the Senator, the Senator has an order to go into recess at 12:30. It would take unanimous consent for the Senate to extend that.

Mr. JOHNSON. I ask unanimous consent to extend morning business, Mr. President.

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

THE DEVASTATION IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today to commend and recognize the strength and tenacity of the residents of my State of South Dakota, and also to further emphasize the importance of this body in expediting the President's request for supplemental appropriations for disasters occurring in the Great Plains and other parts of our country.

I returned to Washington yesterday after spending 6 days touring the devastation occurring in virtually every corner of my State. South Dakotans are a hearty stock and during my years serving the citizens of South Dakota I have repeatedly witnessed South Dakotans' ability to overcome any obstacle Mother Nature has given us. However, I don't believe I have ever seen South Dakotans rise to the occasion in quite the manner they are doing right now under extraordinary circumstances.

I traveled to South Dakota last week expecting to see widespread residual damage from the severe winter weather the State experienced over the past several months and subsequent high water from the ongoing snowpack melt. Relentless sub-zero temperatures and continual snowfall in January forced South Dakota Governor William Janklow to request a major disaster declaration from President Clinton to ensure roads could remain clear for emergency services and basic travel and access to livestock. President Clinton responded positively to the Governor's request and granted the declaration which gave the State additional tools to help meet its basic transportation needs.

Farmers and ranchers began facing hard times last fall with normally available grazing and unharvested row crops being buried with snow. The subsequent extreme cold increased the nutritional requirements of livestock and depleted winter feed supplies. This already tough situation became a crisis when the early January blizzards literally killed livestock and put most producers' livestock at risk because of access to feed being cut off. No one yet knows how many livestock were killed, but estimates top at least 100,000. In addition, many livestock suffered frostbite and were significantly weakened.

During this time, ordinary activities became extremely and increasingly difficult because of the excess snow. Wintertime expenses likely tripled as just getting livestock feed became a Herculean task. The continued stress on livestock, especially cattle, meant that the most important time of the year for ranchers—calving season—was approached with trepidation if not out-

right fear. Nutritional stress during late gestation makes for weak and dead calves.

I toured the State during this winter storm disaster and was struck by the dramatic impact, particularly in the northeastern region of the State, of the winter weather. Snowdrifts as high as buildings, roads with only one lane cleared with snow piled high on either side, homes without heat for days in the bitter cold, tens of thousands of dead livestock, schools closed for a week at a time, and the depletion of our indigenous wildlife populations were commonplace. I vividly remember watching a cow climb to the top of a snowdrift as high as the roof of the barn so that he could eat the shingles from the roof. And, I also remember the positive, stubborn attitude of the residents of South Dakota in the face of this disaster. South Dakotans knew that what they were facing was tough, but they also knew that they were tougher.

As if surviving the severe winter cold of December, January, and February was not challenge enough, residents and State and local officials knew they could not rest from fighting the forces of Mother Nature. Once all of the roads were cleared, emergency services were no longer threatened, and it appeared that the worst of the winter weather was over, focus turned to the next challenge: potential flooding problems the State could experience once the snowpack began to melt.

Governor William Janklow provided exceptional leadership with his comprehensive and aggressive efforts to get every community as ready as it could possibly be for the impending floods. Governor Janklow set up a state task force to monitor the flows of the rivers and to work with local governments in their preparations. State and local governments worked with the Corps of Engineers and the National Weather Service to predict precipitation and runoff levels, identify areas where additional flood protection measures should be undertaken, and design and implement additional flood control measures. The efforts made by communities were considerable. For example:

In Sioux Falls, the largest city in South Dakota, the Big Sioux River flood protection system was temporarily bolstered to hold up to 41,000 cubic feet of water per second. It was designed in the 1950's and 1960's to hold 24,000 cubic feet—5,600 in the main river channel in western Sioux Falls and 18,400 in the diversion channel in the northeast corner of the city. Sioux Falls also aggressively sandbagged and used over 60,000 sandbags in its efforts.

The small community of Davis filled and placed over 8,000 sandbags. Residents of the town of Hecla, population 400, built two dikes at the west and north ends of town to hold back the James River. In Aberdeen, the city built a levee about 2 feet high around the northern edge of the city in just 6 days.

These are just a few examples of the mitigation efforts undertaken by communities all over South Dakota. Because of these efforts, from all reports, South Dakota communities could not have been better prepared for the anticipated flooding. I traveled to South Dakota early last week expecting to see high water fairly well controlled by these mitigation efforts with some areas faring worse than others.

Unfortunately, the situation was worse than I anticipated because Mother Nature, as only she can do, had changed the rules of the game and given the residents of the State of South Dakota more water than initially anticipated and additional severe winter weather. The devastation I witnessed and subsequent destruction in the short time since my touring ended is heart-rending in its thoroughness and in its indiscriminate taking of property and possessions.

Let me give just a few examples of the ways in which our communities have pulled together:

In a relatively small community near Huron, 150 students, volunteers, and State inmates joined together to save the James Valley Christian School from the waters of the James River. Their efforts were absolutely inspiring. These individuals labored for days to stem the rushing James River with a sandbagged dike and sandbags all over the area to protect the school. Unfortunately, the James Valley Christian School lost its fight just days after I toured it. It now sits in 6 feet of water.

I visited the farm of Gary and Diane Foster near Bruce, SD, where 30 head of cattle were calving on a small island surrounded by flood water. I will not soon forget this tragic sight.

It was evident that our farmers will once again face a financially devastating problem in regard to springtime planting. Flooded fields prevent any field preparation, let alone planting. And there probably is not enough time for drying before it will simply become too late to plant this year's crops. In 1995, another very wet year, less than 40 percent of my State's crops were planted on time.

The current flooding means that we probably will not even match 1995's slow performance. This is going to deal a tough blow to the agricultural economy of my State—and, in the end, it will deal a blow to consumers and businesses on Main Street.

I was amazed by the reality that many South Dakotans who normally travel 10-15 miles to work, now have to drive 50-90 miles to work to avoid washed out or water covered roads, which often times are our major highways. The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported that Janice Mellema, a nurse who lives west of Platte but works at the Gregory County Hospital, is forced to leave her home at 3:30 in the morning to arrive at work by 6. She now has a 90-mile commute.

Some 100 people in north central South Dakota have already spent 30

days in a motel after they were evacuated from their homes because of rising water. This last weekend 5,000 people in Watertown, SD, have had to leave their homes.

Essential services in many communities such as wastewater treatment plants are threatened. Many communities' systems have been overwhelmed and have been forced to release untreated water.

Vital infrastructure has been dramatically impacted. During my tour, we drove on roads covered with water and saw many, many county roads completely washed away by a deluge of water. In McCook County every road that goes into the county from both the east to the west and from the north to the south are closed at some point.

Just as South Dakotans were accepting and successfully fighting the increased flows of water, Mother Nature hit the State with yet another blizzard over the weekend. Some areas received 34 inches of snow accompanied by 60-mile-per-hour winds. This winter storm resulted in sub-zero wind chill temperatures and zero visibility in much of the State for an extended period of time. A 100-mile stretch of Interstate 90 was closed and many communities were forced to prohibit all travel. I was stranded in Wall, SD for over 24 hours because of this winter storm.

This winter storm would have been a lot to handle as an isolated incident but coupled with the flooding already experienced all over the State, the impact of the winter weather has been unprecedented. The added precipitation and severe weather has led to unparalleled devastation.

Last weekend's blizzard is truly salt in the wound for producers in my State. Our producers are in the middle of calving season now and trying to prepare for springtime field preparations. The blast of cold and more snow on top of already treacherous conditions will surely mean that the number of dead livestock will continue to rise. This may well put many producers over the edge financially—after all, they only get one chance per year to successfully complete calving season.

This storm severely impacted the city of Watertown, causing the situation to escalate from a 100-year flood event to a 500-year flood event. Earlier this week, Mayor Brenda Barger, who I must commend for her effective leadership during this crisis, poignantly observed that, "It's a humbling thing when you see people out sandbagging in 60-mile-per-hour winds, in a blizzard, knee-deep in water." I think her statement sums up a lot of what everyone has felt over the last few weeks and, in particular, the last few days. Everyone banded together to save and minimize damage to both public and private property regardless of the weather conditions.

In a State that covers 80,000 square miles, it is both rare and unfortunate to have a situation where regions across the entire State are so disas-

trously affected by severe weather. The widespread nature of this disaster has devastated the agribusiness economy of our entire State and assistance in the coming months is absolutely critical to ensuring the future existence of many small businesses in South Dakota. The combined impact of the weather disasters over the last 5 months on agriculture is the gravest threat South Dakota farmers and ranchers have faced from nature in probably 100 years. Additionally, the damage done by the prolonged flooding has jeopardized the long-term viability of parts of South Dakota's infrastructure. Prior to the extensive damage done from this year's severe weather to South Dakota's roads, the State of South Dakota had an excess of \$500 million in backlog needs on its State Highway System alone. And, the damage to personal property is as yet uncalculated in monetary or sentimental value.

Our State has been fortunate enough to receive an outstanding response from President Clinton and FEMA in the past. I am grateful that, once again, the President has responded expeditiously with much needed assistance for South Dakota. Yesterday, the President made a major disaster declaration for the entire State which will supplement the efforts of the State and local governments during this difficult time.

As I mentioned previously, the spirit of South Dakotans, even in this incredibly difficult time, never ceases to amaze me and this weekend's trip re-emphasized that impression in my mind. I am committed to doing everything I can do to assist the State and communities as much as possible to ensure South Dakotans can get back to living their normal lives at the earliest possible time. I look forward to continuing to work with Senator DASCHLE, Representative THUNE, Governor Janklow, and local communities in the coming weeks and months as we clean up from this disaster. After all South Dakotans have endured over the past few months, they need all we can give. We need expeditious action on this floor on the supplemental appropriations requests.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent morning business be extended long enough for me to give my statement, which I believe will be less than 10 minutes.

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

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that the privilege of the floor be accorded to Mr. Dan Katz from my staff, who should be admitted to the floor because he worked so hard.

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

The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.