

DISASTER AREAS IN MICHIGAN

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, on July 2, a series of high-wind storms raged through my State of Michigan. They struck in numerous communities ranging from Chesaning, a small city in Saginaw County, to Thetford and Vienna Townships in Genesee County to Holly, MI, and Oakland County, to parts of the city of Detroit to the small communities of Highland Park and Hamtramck in Wayne County, and then ultimately across to Lake St. Clair passing through several of the communities on the east side of our State, including Grosse Pointe Farms and Grosse Pointe.

In their wake, they left enormous damage, destruction and the loss of human life. Already—and I give great compliment to both our State as well as our Federal emergency services—we have had great assistance in trying to address the problems left behind by this storm. The folks from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, were quickly on the scene to give advice and counsel to our State authorities, and then to assess the damage for purposes of determining what Federal assistance might be provided.

Our own State government, under the leadership of John Engler, was quick to act through its emergency services to assist the various communities affected. And I am happy to report that by and large we have had a remarkable public response, not just through the government agencies, but also through the volunteer efforts of people in communities throughout our State who have risen to the challenge of addressing this serious disaster and crisis.

In the aftermath, we have moved forward in seeking the designation of a disaster area for a number of the communities that were struck by these storms. Just last Friday afternoon, the President declared parts of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties as disaster areas, as well as part of Saginaw County. And we are delighted by that news.

At the same time, I just yesterday morning visited an area that has not yet had such a designation made regarding it. That is the area outside of the city of Flint, MI, Thetford Township. And in visiting Thetford Township yesterday, I could not help but immediately conclude that we need to expand the designation of disaster areas to include this township and the neighboring township of Vienna Township in Genesee County.

According to the National Weather Service, three tornadoes hit this area during the storm. These communities are small. The population of Thetford Township is roughly 8,000 to 9,000 people. Almost all of them are in one form or another in the business of agriculture. Many of them are family farmers.

This township—approximately 36 square miles—is almost exclusively farmland north of the city of Flint.

Just to put it in perspective what transpired there, one individual was killed, a variety of livestock were likewise lost, two huge steel power lines were down, feed bins were overturned, barns were obliterated, silos were decapitated.

I visited a number of these farms yesterday and was amazed that more people weren't hurt, because the devastation and damage was incredible. It looked, as I reported in my last remarks about the storms, like a Hollywood movie set, except this was not acting, this was real, and families affected were not actors and actresses, but real people in our State.

So I pledged yesterday that I would come back today and not only talk about this, but work to try to secure for these tiny communities the designation as disaster areas that has been afforded much larger communities throughout the State who likewise are deserving of such designation being affected by the storms.

Again, I want to thank the President. I want to thank FEMA for their rapid response to our requests last week. And I say that I do not think there is going to be any cost involved in expanding the designation to include Thetford and Vienna Townships, but the injuries and the damage done there are every bit as real and every bit as serious to those tiny communities as was the case in larger ones.

Interestingly, although wholly unconnected with my visit yesterday, in the Detroit Free Press a story about these communities ran entitled "Hardy Farmers Weather the Storm; Despite Damage, They're Rebounding." I ask unanimous consent that that article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Detroit Free Press, July 14, 1997]

HARDY FARMERS WEATHER THE STORM—
DESPITE DAMAGE, THEY'RE REBOUNDING

(By Bill McGraw)

THETFORD TOWNSHIP.—Don Rasmussen took refuge in a big cow barn on the dairy farm he manages when the sky turned black and the wind began to howl.

Parts of other buildings began blowing through the air. The rain fell sideways. The noise grew into a constant roar.

Then it really got crazy.

"The cows just freaked," Rasmussen recalled Friday, while a newborn calf nearby was taking its first steps. "All around me, they were stampeding. They aren't the most intelligent animals, and they had no idea what was happening. They just ran."

Rasmussen remained safe, both from the tornado and the stampeding Holsteins, and guided a reporter Friday around the battered farm near Clio in Genesee County.

Tornadoes don't usually hit big cities, so the impact of the July 2 storm on Detroit and its suburbs has dominated news coverage. But the National Weather Service identified three twisters in the rolling farmland outside Flint, and at least one passed through the 1,000-acres owned by Larry Niec. The result: six dead cows and heavy damage.

Because of storm damage estimated at \$2.3 million to this and other sites in southern Michigan, the U.S. Department of Agri-

culture's Farm Service Agency last week asked that federal low-interest loans be made available to Michigan farmers like Niec. This assistance would be separate from the federal funds President Bill Clinton approved Friday.

Niec (pronounced NEESE), who looks younger than his 51 years, said: "We have insurance. It covers a lot, but not everything."

His farm looks like a giant worked it over with a sledgehammer.

"It's so sad," said Rasmussen, 47, who lives across the street from Niec's 300-cow dairy operation.

The gusts decapitated silos, obliterated barns, overturned heavy feed bins, toyed with a semi-trailer, scattered calf hutches and downed two huge steel towers that carry several power lines. The storm thoroughly spooked the cows, but Rasmussen said most of them appear to have returned to normal.

The winds spared some things, such as the manure lagoon and an old red barn. But there is so much damage that the insurance adjuster has yet to complete his estimate.

As the storm moved away, friends and relatives arrived to help round up the cows, calm them, take them to the milking parlor and ship the daily output of 1,750 gallons of milk.

Rasmussen and Niec are sanguine about the future.

Niec notes that the tornado damage, while spectacular, is no more harmful than the droughts, fluctuating milk prices and bad crops that have made dairy farming a tough way to earn a living.

When friends asked Niec how he stood the stress, he told them it isn't much different from any other day.

Said Niec: "We're going to suffer, but we know how to suffer."

Mr. ABRAHAM. Featured in the story is discussion of a gentleman named Larry Niec. Larry's 1,000-acre farm is depicted here with a caption that reads in part: "strewn with pieces of once-sturdy buildings, like his roofless dairy barn and severed silo. Six of his cows were killed during the storm."

Obviously, a very difficult time in the farm season for him and for his neighbors. And I do not want to read from the entire article now. It is included in the RECORD.

As I say, the devastation was incredible. Mr. Niec, of course, being a hardy soul, as depicted in the headline of the story, noted that the tornado damage, while spectacular, is no more harmful than the droughts, fluctuating milk prices, bad crops, and so on, which the farmers learn to live with in their day-in and day-out existence. When friends asked Larry how he stood the stress, he told them that it isn't much different from any other day. He said, "We're going to suffer, but we know how to suffer."

I met Larry yesterday and he, indeed, is somebody who will persevere. As I said, the cost and the damage is so considerable that we need some help for these folks as well. Of course, under the current system, they will be entitled to the assistance of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and through the Small Business Administration. But it is my fervent view that the communities of Thetford and Vienna Townships deserve to be designated, as some

of the others have, as an official disaster, to receive a broader range of support that they deserve and should be available to them.

Without going into all of the details, I can only say, if you drive down any of the roads, whether it is Center Road or Genesee Road or Bray Road in Thetford Township, as I did yesterday, and you see the decapitated silos with huge chunks of cement strewn everywhere and trees in which semitruck trailers ended up after they were hurled into the air, and if you see the huge openings that have been driven through the fields and the forest lands, you know if this area doesn't qualify as a disaster area, I don't know what would, Mr. President.

The damage was not just of public property; it is to private property, also. Happily, it wasn't more serious, but definitely it deserves our attention. For that reason, today I will be writing our Governor, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency authorities, to ask that the designation be expanded to include this community. I hope they will respond as they have responded already. I wish to make it clear that I don't know of any reason not to, nor in any way am I criticizing actions today. We are moving piece by piece through the process. I hope they will respond to this as well and help us to make sure that these people—they may be small in numbers, as I say, but the people who live there are just as real as the folks in all the other communities. So I intend to work very hard to make sure all the relief possible is made available to them.

Mr. President, I thank you and yield the floor at this time.

CHATHAM STUDENTS EXCELL

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is a privilege to take this opportunity to recognize the impressive accomplishments of students at Chatham High School in Massachusetts. A team of these students excelled recently against other teams representing schools in all 50 States and the District of Columbia in the nationwide finals of the "We the People. * * * The Citizen and the Constitution" competition. This talented and knowledgeable group of students demonstrated their expertise on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and were recognized above other teams for their superior knowledge on this topic.

These issues are at the heart of our democracy and our constitutional system of government. It is gratifying that so many students across the country are learning about these issues at an early age.

The Bill of Rights, in particular, teaches important values about individual freedom and responsibility, and is the basis for our most precious liberties.

The students at Chatham High School deserve great credit for their achievement. I commend them for

their skill and dedication. Massachusetts is so proud of them all—Heather Baker, Taylor Brown, Jonathan Buck, Lauren D'Elia, Hannah Farnham, Casey Jordan, Joshua Lamoureux, Jill Matteson, Nathan Miller, Allison Morris, Nalinee Murphy, Douglas Smith-Elion, Rebecca Spencer, and Joseph Thonus. Also, I commend the superb leadership of their teacher, Tom Flaherty.

CONGRATULATIONS TO CLARENCE VERNON WOODSIDE CELEBRATING HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to join me in congratulating Clarence Vernon Woodside of Excelsior Springs, MO, who will celebrate his 100th birthday on August 11, 1997. Clarence is a truly remarkable individual. He has witnessed many of the events that have shaped our Nation into the greatest the world has ever known. The longevity of Clarence's life has meant much more, however, to the many relatives and friends whose lives he has touched over the last 100 years.

Clarence's celebration of 100 years of life is a testament to me and all Missourians. His achievements are significant and deserve to be recognized. I would like to join his many friends and relatives in wishing Clarence health and happiness in the future.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, July 14, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,355,393,906,769.08. (Five trillion, three hundred fifty-five billion, three hundred ninety-three million, nine hundred and six thousand, seven hundred and sixty-nine dollars and eight cents.)

Twenty-five years ago, July 14, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$430,417,000,000 (Four hundred thirty billion, four hundred and seventeen million dollars).

Fifteen years ago, July 14, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,079,571,000,000 (One trillion, seventy-nine billion, and five hundred and seventy-one million dollars).

Ten years ago, July 14, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,317,949,000,000 (Two trillion, three hundred and seventeen billion and nine hundred and forty-nine million dollars).

Five years ago, July 14, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,972,195,000,000 (Three trillion, nine hundred and seventy-two billion and one hundred and ninety-five million dollars) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,924,976,906,769 (Four trillion, nine hundred twenty-four billion, nine hundred seventy-six million, nine hundred and six thousand, seven hundred and sixty-nine dollars) during the past 25 years.

RETURN THE EMERGING BUDGET SURPLUS TO THE TAXPAYER

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the emerging budget surplus and what Congress should do about it. According to recent Congressional Budget Office and Office of Management and Budget estimates, the fiscal 1997 budget deficit could be smaller than \$50 billion. The reason: Robust economic growth continues to boost tax receipts beyond projections. As a result, the deficit is declining rapidly and the budget could be balanced by the year 2000 or earlier.

Further, if the President signs a tax bill that includes a deep cut in the capital gains tax, a budget surplus could emerge next year. Economist Larry Kudlow predicts that cutting the top capital gains tax rate to 20 percent could produce a \$90 billion revenue windfall next year, assuming only 15 percent of investors realize their stock market gains from 3 years ago.

The question we face is this: Should future budget surpluses—if they materialize—be used to retire the national debt, increase Government spending, or further reduce taxes?

Our colleague, Representative MARK NEUMANN of Wisconsin, has offered The National Debt Repayment Act which proposes to use budget surpluses primarily to retire the national debt. This legislation would earmark two-thirds of any surpluses to debt reduction and only one-third to tax reduction. The plan attempts to build budget surpluses in future years by limiting the growth of Government spending at 1 percentage point lower than the growth of tax revenues.

Although well-intentioned, the bill contains several problems. First, it would have the practical effect of locking-in high tax rates on the American people. Under the plan, Congress would have to maintain a tax burden that is higher than is necessary to pay for current Government spending. In fact, as economist Bruce Bartlett points out, "(the Neumann) plan actually implies a stiff tax increase. Revenues as a share of gross domestic product would rise from 19.9 percent next year to 20.8 percent in 2002," producing one of the highest tax burdens in U.S. history. Further, because the plan calls for revenue growth to outrace spending growth, Congress will have the perverse incentive to keep taxes high.

Second, the bill does nothing to reduce the size of the Federal Government. It is designed to generate budget surpluses, but does nothing about the actual levels of either Government spending or revenues. As long as tax revenues are growing, Government spending can grow too.

Third, the bill would preclude significant tax rate reductions and fundamental tax reforms in the future. In my view, any budget surplus would be far better spent by cutting taxes that are most burdensome and stifling to economic growth. Enacting pro-growth tax reforms and increasing the size of