

United States as if we do not have the technical capability to open up this area safely is not fraught with any degree of accuracy but it is simply misleading arguments that environmental groups continue to use to generate revenue in dollars.

I encourage each Member to recognize the obligation that we have. That obligation is do what is right for America. What is right for America is to produce more energy and and to produce clean energy here at home.

One of the inconsistencies we have is that nobody seems to really care where they get the oil as long as they get it. They do not concern themselves with whether it comes from a scorched Earth, lack of any environmental oversight a field in Iraq, or from fields in Saudi Arabia, or from the rain forests of Colombia. They only care if they get it.

As I have said time and time again, the world will continue to depend on oil, because that is what the world moves on. We have no other alternative.

Some people suggest we have alternatives, but hot air is not going to move us in an out of Washington, DC, although occasionally there is quite a bit of it here.

I yield the floor. 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, under the order previously entered, the Senator from Connecticut is entitled to the floor. I ask unanimous consent that Senator KERRY be recognized, and that he be allowed to speak for—how long does the Senator from Massachusetts wish to speak?

Mr. KERRY. A few minutes.

Mr. REID. Up to 15 minutes.

Mr. KERRY. Not more.

Mr. REID. And following that, I would advise the Senate that we will be in a position, at that time, to ask unanimous consent to proceed with legislation today, tomorrow, and Monday, and maybe into Tuesday. The two leaders have worked this out. It is now being drafted, and the two floor staffs have agreed on what the language should be. It is being typed now, and we should be back in 15 minutes, following the statement from the Senator of Massachusetts.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the business before the Senate is the homeland security bill; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. Does the clerk need to report that or is it automatic?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk does not need to report that.

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized for 15 minutes.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, thank you very much. And I thank the distinguished assistant majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 2734

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I am going to be asking unanimous consent to proceed forward on the bill, but I am not going to do that until someone is here from the other side. And I know they are going to object, or most likely will object.

But let me bring to the attention of my colleagues in the Senate a situation that is not dissimilar to a situation we faced some months ago in trying to provide emergency assistance, under the Small Business Administration, to those who had been affected by the events of September 11 of last year.

We had a lot of small businesses in the country that were hurting that had collateral damage, if you will, as a consequence of those events. Many, many small businesses were dependent on the economy as it flows through all sectors. So whether it was a small dry-cleaner that was affected because they were not doing as much business because hotels were not doing as much business or a limousine company or a taxi company, there are many people who were affected tangentially because of the dropoff in air travel, and so forth.

It took us a number of months, almost six, unfortunately, in the Senate to respond in a way that many of us thought was both appropriate and adequate. And, again, we are sort of running into a strange kind of unexplained resistance by the administration to something that makes common sense, is very inexpensive but also very necessary for a lot of small entrepreneurs in our country. I am specifically referring to the Small Business Drought Relief Act.

In more than 30 States in our country, we have a declared drought emergency. And the drought is as significant in some places as it was during the great Dust Bowl years of the Depression in the United States.

Drought hurts more than farmers, more than ranchers. The purpose of this bill is to try to provide some emergency assistance, in an affordable and sensible way, for those small businesses that are not in agricultural-related fields but desperately cannot get help, and need it, and cannot get it because the SBA does not apply the law uniformly for all victims of drought.

The SBA makes disaster loans to small businesses related to agriculture that are hurt by drought, but they are turning away small businesses that are in industries unrelated to agriculture, and claiming that those businesses are

not entitled to it because drought does not fit the definition of disaster.

That is just wrong. It is wrong because the law does not restrict them from making loans to those small businesses. It is wrong because that is not the intent of the Congress to turn away those small businesses, and they should be following the law and following the intent of Congress.

I might add that the SBA has in effect right now disaster declarations in 30 States that I just talked about. For instance, in South Carolina, the entire State has been declared a disaster by the SBA, but the administration is not helping all of the drought victims in South Carolina that are looking for help.

Let me share with you the declaration of drought itself. It addresses this question of intent.

Small businesses located in all 46 counties may apply for economic injury disaster loan assistance through the SBA.

Let me read to you from the declaration:

Small businesses located in all 46 counties may apply for economic injury disaster loan assistance through the SBA. These are working capital loans to help the business continue to meet its obligations until the business returns to normal conditions. . . . Only small, non-farm agriculture dependent and small agricultural cooperatives are eligible to apply for assistance. Nurseries are also eligible for economic injury caused by drought conditions.

What do I mean by other businesses that may be affected by drought? In South Carolina, conditions are so bad that small businesses dependent on lake and river tourism have seen their revenues drop anywhere from 17 to 80 percent. So you have victims of the drought that range from fish and tackle shops to rafting businesses, from restaurants to motels, from marinas to gas stations. Their livelihood is no less impacted and no less important than those who have been deemed to fit under only the agricultural definition.

Thousands of small businesses make their living in tourism, recreation industries, not just in South Carolina but in many other parts of the country, including my State of Massachusetts, in Texas, Michigan, Delaware, and elsewhere.

In fact, for a lot of States around the Great Lakes Basin, sport fishing, as reported by the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, brings into the region some \$4 billion a year. There are many industries that are dependent on water that are affected by drought, and they ought to be eligible for this help.

Is this opening Pandora's box with respect to a flow of lending that we cannot afford? The answer is definitively no. The SBA already has the authority, but its lawyers have decided not to help these industries based on their own interpretation of a definition, despite the fact that Congress believes otherwise.

That defies both common sense and fairness. Small businesses with everything on the line desperately need this,