

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding the time for morning business has expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each until 6:30 this evening.

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

The Senator from Louisiana.

HURRICANE ISADORE, WETLANDS, AND IRAQ RESOLUTION

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise to speak on three important matters. Let me begin with the most important matter to the people of Louisiana at this moment, which is the pending hurricane. Hurricane Lili is in the Gulf of Mexico, and she is headed Louisiana's way. Unfortunately, this will be the second major storm in less than a week we have had to protect ourselves against and prepare for the consequences of the aftermath.

Let me begin by thanking the President and FEMA, and particularly all of the FEMA officials who are now down in Louisiana helping us prepare again. FEMA Director Joe Albaugh was with us in Louisiana last week, as we dodged a bullet with Isadore—a storm that was huge in its mass but short in its intensity. As a result, while there was some sporadic flooding and some very damaging flooding to approximately 1,000 homes and businesses, including some that were ruined completely, it wasn't the widespread damage we have become familiar with in the Gulf South from hurricanes.

Hurricane Lili is packing winds of 140 miles per hour; barreling toward our coast and is likely to hit somewhere between New Orleans and Galveston. It could hit Lafayette or Lake Charles, somewhere on the coast of Louisiana.

The reason I rise to speak about this storm is not because there is a whole lot we can do in Washington, today. We will be down there this weekend. We will get to assess the damage. We can't do anything today. But there is a great deal we can do from Washington in the future to help the Gulf Coast the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

From Washington, we can begin to focus on the kind of investments we should be making along the Gulf Coast that help protect us against the consequences of such storms—particularly as it comes to protecting the energy infrastructure in this Nation, which is so vital and crucial to the economic stability and well-being of the Nation.

We produce about 80 percent of all of the offshore oil and gas in the Nation off the coast of Louisiana. Right now, as I speak, the Gulf of Mexico has been evacuated. I have been on the phone with officers of chemical companies, and oil and gas companies, and they are shutting down refineries and platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. Why? Because you cannot keep them running when you have storms such as this, or you could gravely endanger the lives of those working out in the Gulf. I wish I could paint a more vivid picture, but over 20,000 miles of pipeline, many refineries, and thousands of platforms out in the gulf, all of which are critical to America's energy supply, will be directly threatened by Hurricane Lili. We take a lot of taxes out of the gulf region. There are a lot of taxes that the oil and gas industry pays, and that money leaves south Louisiana and Texas and goes right up to the Federal Treasury. Then it funds various projects all over the country.

You would think some of that money might come back to Louisiana to invest in Louisiana to elevate and improve our highways and provide better security to this infrastructure. After all, its through these highways and this infrastructure that energy is carried and produced to support not just Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, but to turn the lights on in the entire country. Even when the winds are blowing down south, we keep the lights on up north. At the energy conference—my able partner, Senator BREUX, is going to be carrying this message as a member of the energy conference. Of course, Congressman TAUZIN from Louisiana is chairing the conference. We are going to carry this message directly into the energy conference to see if there is something we can get the Congress to do in a bipartisan way that says, yes, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas—the oil and gas-producing States—should share in some of these revenues so we can invest on the front end in terms of what the Gulf South needs to secure these energy resources. Congress must be fair to people in Louisiana, who are happy to serve as hosts to this offshore oil and gas industry. We are proud of the way we are doing it in a much more environmentally sensitive way. But we need help to ensure we receive a fair share of the royalties that come from our rich natural resources.

The country does not also realize the great loss of wetlands and the erosion Louisiana has experienced. Think about this. There is a hurricane coming off the Gulf of Mexico. The only thing between it and the cities or towns is the marsh. The bigger that marsh is, the greater the buffer is from the storm. It will break the wind, break the tides. As that marsh erodes away, there is nothing to break the wind or the tide, so the destruction becomes greater and greater, year after year after year.

The reason the marsh is subsiding is that we have tamed the Mississippi

River. We have levied it. We levied it not just for the people in Louisiana so we would not flood, but so the ships can take grain from Kansas and Iowa. This commerce then comes down the Mississippi and can go to any number of countries. Louisiana is an importing and exporting station for so many of the goods coming into and out of this country. This benefits everyone. We are telling you and begging this Senate and this Congress to recognize benefits Louisiana provides to the Nation. Louisiana is proud of that, but we need extra Federal help to secure this marshland, to help rebuild it, and protect us. If Louisiana does not receive help the wetlands will disappear, and the people of Louisiana will be sitting ducks for future floods and storms.

I am sure Senator BREUX and I will be back on the Senate floor on Monday and Tuesday trying to explain to everybody the horrible damage that has occurred because of Hurricane Lili and the importance of trying to be smart and invest some of these monies on the front end in Louisiana. This is not only fair and the right thing to do, but for the taxpayers, we would just as soon pay a little now or we are going to pay a lot in claims when these homes and businesses are destroyed in the Gulf South.

There is nothing we can do about keeping hurricanes from coming ashore. We cannot prevent them. People say: Senator, can't you do something? I say: If I could pass a resolution, I would. But, of course, there is nothing we can do about that. But we can be more prepared than we are.

While we are making progress, we have a long way to go. So whether it is at the energy conference, where I hope we will have a positive outcome, or in the new transportation bill where we can talk about the highways and evacuation routes in south Louisiana and the Gulf South need our attention. Not only do they serve as economic highways that are really necessary for commerce to flourish, but, as you know, when the hurricanes come, it is the only way for people to flee the storm. We don't have trains, as people do in the Northeast, to get out of harm's way. All we have in Louisiana are highways dangerously crowded with automobiles and pickup trucks. We need to make sure people can get north to higher ground. Hundreds of thousands of people in my state are jamming the highways to escape Lili and head for higher ground in north Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas. Hotel rooms are scarce, and people will have trouble finding safe-haven from Lili.

So we will be back talking about it. There are opportunities in the transportation bill, and when we debate the Corps of Engineers bill, to try to make right this situation. The Senate will then debate whether to help Louisiana in a direct way—not just Louisiana, but the whole gulf coast region.

The final point I want to share is a figure I came across a couple years ago