

Program, that provides aid to those whose needs cannot be met through insurance or other assistance. Presently, these grants may not exceed \$26,200 per individual or household. This provision would waive those caps on home repair, rent, temporary housing, or home replacement.

“Other Needs” assistance under this IHP, so-called Individuals and Households Program, also addresses medical, dental, and even funeral expenses. The States are required to provide 25 percent of the amount provided for some of these grants. Given the overwhelming nature of this episode and the terrible financial impact on the States, this provision would also waive the State contribution.

This is an opportunity to take care of some basic human needs, get some help for dental, medical, funeral, and household needs.

Second, this amendment will temporarily reinstate the Mortgage and Rental Payments Program, or coverage for rental or mortgage payments for those in danger of defaulting on their mortgage and losing their homes resulting from the financial hardship resulting from the disaster. The program had been eliminated in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 because FEMA said the program was difficult to administer. But it was revived after September 11, with good cause, and it should be revived again with, unfortunately, a similarly good cause in the wake of Katrina.

Three, the amendment calls for a 6-month moratorium on the imposition of any penalties or additional accrued interest for people whose lives have been shaken by Hurricane Katrina and who fail to make timely payments for student loans, Small Business loans, or other loans made, subsidized, or guaranteed by the Federal Government. This will allow a breather for these people whose lives have been totally altered, removed from their homes, from their workplaces, their neighborhoods, and it will give them a 6-month breather on any penalties or accrued interest if they can't make payments for that period of time. This amendment also authorizes the President to extend that moratorium for an additional 6 months.

Four, this amendment eases bankruptcy provisions that otherwise are scheduled to take effect about a month and a half from now. History shows that bankruptcies often double in the wake of a disaster. This easing will go simply to people affected by Hurricane Katrina in the three Gulf States that were hit. Without this provision, many families hurt by this hurricane could wind up without access—not just hurt but devastated financially—to the bankruptcy laws under the new law.

Fifth, this amendment would extend and expand benefits under the Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program. It would extend the application period from 30 to 90 days. I know the Department of Labor and State officials are

trying very hard to tell people they have a right to apply for this special form of unemployment assistance, to get some money coming in to support their families. There is a 30-day period because everybody is spread so far apart. Normally in a disaster, the disaster occurs and people go back basically to where they were. Now they are spread all over the country. This would extend the application period from 30 to 90 days.

In addition, it would expand the program to include individuals eligible for State unemployment insurance and those who suffer from the secondary economic effects of the disaster.

Finally, it would extend the duration of benefits for victims who otherwise qualify from 26 to 52 weeks and create an enhanced minimum benefit level.

We have been reading stories that an amazing number of the people who were dislocated by Hurricane Katrina and now are in other States are already out looking for work and finding it. This is for the people who haven't been able to find it, and it will give them some assistance for their families.

Estimates suggest that as many as a half million workers will be left jobless by Hurricane Katrina, and that unemployment may soar to 25 percent or more in some of the regions affected as a result. The families, therefore, will desperately need this extended lifeline this amendment will provide.

Six, the amendment would suspend the tax and penalties on withdrawals from qualified retirement plans so that those who have suffered losses as a result of Hurricane Katrina can use money that otherwise would be in their retirement plans and for which they would be penalized for early withdrawal. They can now rebuild their lives and not suffer adverse tax consequences. Individuals who access funds in these accounts would have 5 years to repay the money to the account.

In addition, the amendment calls on the Secretary of the Treasury to suspend tax payment, return filing, and other time-limited actions required of taxpayers for a period of not less than 6 months. In other words, it would give these people not a free pass but a little bit of space before they have to go back to fulfilling all the obligations required, without diminishing those obligations.

I know by administrative action the Treasury Secretary has already said for people in these areas who would be paying estimated tax payments—I believe on September 15—they will not have to pay until the end of October.

Seven, we must feed the victims. It is as elemental as that.

We all saw the devastation this hurricane wreaked in terms of displaced families, destroyed livelihoods, and flooded homes. We also know how it affected the fundamental need for water and food. Across Connecticut and across America, I am sure the power of this act of nature was stunning. Of

course, loss of life filled us with grief. But what really angered and in some sense embarrassed a lot of people across this country was to see our fellow human beings and fellow Americans trapped by this disaster without adequate access to food or water.

This amendment provides additional funding to purchase and distribute food and temporarily suspend food stamp requirements that, frankly, don't make sense in the wake of this disaster. I am thinking of a requirement that says a victim has to show proof that his or her car was worth less than \$4,600. It is probably hard for a lot of people who would otherwise qualify for food stamps to be able to make that showing. We ought to suspend it.

Those are the seven parts of this proposal in this amendment. When all is said and done, the first step in rebuilding for most of these people will be to get back on a firm financial footing again. That is exactly the intent of this proposal. It is to give these people a breather, to give them a little temporary help. It is our Nation's way and our Federal Government's way of doing what neighbors and individuals are doing all over America, which is to reach out. I think it is the most generous expression of caring for one another I have ever seen in the history of this country, and it is our Government's way of trying to do the same so that people, once back on their feet, can begin to walk and then run to a better life.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, so many Members of this Chamber have stood on the floor this past week to speak about the victims of the disaster, the catastrophe down in the gulf region, to speak of the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This morning I would like to spend a few brief moments to talk about some other victims, some very young victims, victims of a disease that is absolutely entirely preventable. This morning I speak very briefly about those young children who are born with a fetal alcohol disorder.

The ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth month having arrived today, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate observe a very brief moment of reflection to remind women who are pregnant or those who may soon become pregnant that no amount of alcohol—none at all—is safe to consume during the 9 months of pregnancy.

If we may have a brief moment of reflection.

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

(moment of silence.)

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, thank you.

By raising awareness one moment, one person at a time, we can minimize the harm that drinking during pregnancy causes to our most vulnerable population, and that is our children.

In February of 1999, there was a small group of parents who were raising children afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. These parents set out to change the world. That small group started an online support group which quickly became a worldwide grassroots movement to observe September 9 as International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. Former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle was instrumental in having the Senate take notice of this important issue. He has worked very hard on this issue, and continues so today. We thank him for his efforts.

This year, for the seventh consecutive year, communities across the Nation are pausing at the hour of 9:09 a.m. to acknowledge this day.

Events are occurring in cities and towns not just across the country but around the world—from Chilliwack, British Columbia, to Cape Town, South Africa, to Madagascar. Families are joining today to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, or FASD.

In Alaska, Alaskans will observe this day in solemn events in Anchorage, Juneau, Kenai, Fairbanks, and other communities.

FASD is an umbrella term that describes a range of physical and mental birth defects that can occur in a fetus when a pregnant woman consumes alcohol. It is a leading cause of non-hereditary mental retardation in the United States. Many children affected by maternal drinking during pregnancy have irreversible conditions, including severe brain damage. It is causing permanent lifelong disability. We have to keep this in perspective.

FASD is 100 percent preventable. Prevention merely requires a woman to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy. Knowing that it is entirely preventable, it is amazing to me to think that every year in this country an estimated 1 in every 100 babies are born with FASD. That is about 40,000 infants annually. FASD affects more children than Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy combined.

The cost of FASD is huge: More than \$3 billion each year in direct health care costs and many times that amount in lost human potential. Lifetime health costs for an individual living with FASD can average \$860,000.

The indirect financial and social costs to the Nation are even greater, including specialized health care, education, foster care, job training, cost of incarceration, general support services.

All in all, the direct and indirect economic costs of FASD in the United States are estimated to be \$5.4 billion. FASD is found in every community in America, in Native, non-Native, rich, poor. It does not discriminate.

That is why, last February, the U.S. Surgeon General, Richard Carmona, again issued another advisory, to protect women, to completely abstain from alcohol use.

In Alaska, we have very troubling statistics as they relate to FASD. We have the highest rate of FASD in the Nation. Approximately 163 Alaskan babies are born each year affected by maternal alcohol use during pregnancy. Among our Native communities, the statistics are even worse. The rate of FASD is 15 times higher than non-Native areas in our State.

This is a disease syndrome that is 100 percent preventable. We can save so many children, so many families, so much heartache simply by increasing people's awareness of what FASD is and how we can prevent it.

In fact, prevention of FASD is seven times more cost effective than treating the disorder. That is why Senator JOHNSON and I and several other Senators from both sides of the aisle will soon introduce legislation to direct more resources toward this terrible problem. The legislation we are introducing is called the Advancing FASD Research, Prevention and Services Act. It is designed to develop and implement targeted State and community-based outreach programs to improve coordination among Federal agencies involved in FASD treatment and research by establishing stronger communication with these programs and also to improve support services for families and strengthening educational outreach efforts to doctors, teachers, judges, and others whose work puts them in contact with those with FASD.

Mr. President, 40,000 American children a year are born with FASD. Our investment today in prevention, treatment, and research will save countless and future health care costs of this devastating, but entirely preventable, disorder.

I ask my colleagues to join with Senator JOHNSON and I in supporting the advancing FASD Research, Prevention and Services Act.

Today, on Fetal Alcohol Awareness Day, let us remember all innocent babies afflicted with this disorder and let us imagine the potential they could have but for this damage from alcohol. I hope we continue to recognize, to pause in the ninth hour of the ninth day of each September until fetal alcohol syndrome disorders are eradicated.

I yield the floor and 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. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GREAT APE CONSERVATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar No. 194, S. 1250.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1250) to reauthorize the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with amendments, as follows:

(Strike the part shown in black brackets and insert the part shown in italic.)

S. 1250

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. GREAT APE CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE.

Section 4 of the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6303) is amended—

(1) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (4)(C), by striking “or” after the semicolon at the end;

(B) in paragraph (5), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(6) address root causes of threats to great apes in range states, including illegal bushmeat trade, diseases, lack of regional or local capacity for conservation, and habitat loss due to natural disasters.”; and

(2) in subsection (i)—

(A) by striking “Every” and inserting the following:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Every”;

(B) in paragraph (1) (as designated by subparagraph (A)), by striking “shall” and inserting “may”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(2) APPLICABILITY OF FACA.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 App. U.S.C.) shall not apply to a panel convened under paragraph (1).”.

SEC. 2. GREAT APE CONSERVATION FUND.

Section 5(b)(2) of the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6304(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) by striking “expand” and inserting “expand”;

(2) by striking “\$80,000” and inserting “\$150,000”.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

The Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000 is amended by striking section 6 (16 U.S.C. 6305) and inserting the following:

“SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

“There are authorized to be appropriated to the Fund—

“(1) \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2006 and 2007; and

“(2) \$7,000,000 for [fiscal year 2008; and] each of fiscal years 2008 through 2010.”.

“(3) \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 and 2010.”.]

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent the committee-reported amendments be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.