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Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE SUPERDOME

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, it is only 1:50 p.m. in New Orleans, but the bands have been marching since early

this morning, and the singing is joyful. People have been so excited not only in New Orleans but in all of Louisiana because tonight the Saints will be marching again into that grand, wonderful building we call the Superdome.

The Superdome has always been a special symbol to New Orleans, but tonight that symbol takes on a new meaning. It has been a symbol of pride in the past, and tonight it is a symbol of hope—a symbol of hope for the great rebuilding of our wonderful city, region, and State.

Just a year ago, the Superdome was a symbol of sadness, loss, confusion, and despair as New Orleans, the region, and our State faced the worst natural disaster in the history of this country. It wasn't just Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that caused devastation, it was also the levees that collapsed and put a great city and region under some 20 to 25 feet of water. It was in that overwhelming flood that people fled to the Dome looking for safety and security. All of America knows this sad story.

But I am here to talk about a story of recovery, a story of leadership. I want to thank the people who made the Dome's reopening possible—to thank the men and women who work at the Dome: the welders, the janitors, the cleanup crews, the construction crews, the managers, the architects, and the engineers.

They spent the whole year rebuilding this Dome on a schedule that no one thought was possible, at a cost that came under budget. A partnership formed between the NFL, the State of Louisiana, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to get this building back into shape and reopen tonight with 68,000 fans coming to watch the Saints play the Atlanta Falcons.

I want to remind the country that these employees showed up to work each day to restore the Dome, many of them traveling hours to get there in the morning and hours back in the evening because there were no nearby houses for them to sleep. Many of them lost their homes, their children lost their schools, and their churches were destroyed.

The successful rebuilding of the Dome is because of the people who showed up to work. Their journeys in the morning and their journeys home show a commitment to rebuilding a great city. Despite the criticism that the city, the State and the region have received, tonight is a symbol of all that is great about the spirit of the people who refuse to let this city die.

Desiree Jones, who lives in Violet, La., is the housekeeping manager for the Superdome. She started working at the Dome 25 years ago as a janitor. Every day for the past two weeks, she has been working to get the Dome ready for tonight. She knows the Dome's reopening is a signal of rebirth for our city.

I come to the floor to thank the thousands of men and women who worked on the Superdome. The were

led by a wonderful leader, a young man who has really shown his stripes and all of New Orleans is singing his praises: Doug Thornton, the general manager of the Dome. He stayed in the Superdome with his wife and children doing everything he could to help the evacuees. His heroic efforts during those harrowing days a year ago have been well reported. But what might not be known is that Doug and his wife also lost their home. He didn't see his wife for weeks because he spent his time rebuilding the Dome while Denise spent time rebuilding their house in Lakeview. That is what people all over New Orleans and South Louisiana and the Gulf Coast are doing—going to work to rebuild the refineries, the pipelines, the industries, while their spouses are at home rebuilding what is left of their houses.

Doug Thornton, general manager of the Superdome, is no exception. He deserves a tremendous amount of credit.

Tim Coulon, the chairman of the Louisiana Stadium Exhibition District, is a former Jefferson Parish president and a man I know well. Tim has always been a very quiet but competent and effective leader. His leadership doesn't come from loud speeches and pushing but from quiet determination. Tim, his staff, and other board members worked very closely with Governor Blanco, who signed executive order after executive order, to cut through the redtape and expedite the Superdome's rebuilding.

That partnership between our Governor, the stadium commissioners, and Doug Thornton was the leadership team that put this Superdome back together.

I also have to say for the record that Paul Tagliabue, former commissioner of the NFL, saw what happened at the Superdome and decided that the NFL was a service organization, and its first job was to service teams and the cities. He understands something about the emotional connection between the teams and the cities that host them. The teams become a part of the spirit of every city, and he would not allow the Saints' spirit to die.

He said the Saints will march again. He said the Dome will be rebuilt, and let's get to it. New Orleans will forever be grateful to Paul Tagliabue and his staff at the NFL for their belief in our city and for not cutting and running, not leaving when times got tough for us. They stood their ground, and we are very grateful.

I also want to go on the record to say that the Dome has been a symbol of our city for 31 years. Its origin goes back to Governor John McKeithen. He was not from New Orleans. He was actually a country boy from Columbia, LA. But as our Governor, he had a vision of what a great Dome could mean to a great American city, a great southern city. He, along with the mayor at that time, my father, Moon Landrieu, along with Dave Dixon, a local businessman, decided the Dome

would mean renewal for the city. The three of them overcame all sorts of political hurdles and were able to build this great Dome.

We have hosted more Super Bowls than any building in America. It sits on 52 acres of land in the central business district. The Superdome has a seating capacity of over 70,000, depending on the event.

When Dave Dixon had a vision for this Dome, he told our Governor at the time: You know, Governor, we will have a Pope here one day and a President here one day.

Nobody believed him when he said that. But sure enough, President Reagan honored all of us when the Republican National Convention came to New Orleans 18 years ago.

It was a proud time for New Orleans and Louisiana when 19 years ago, Pope John Paul II made the first ever Papal visit to Louisiana and held a rally in front of 80,000 children in that Dome. It was a site to behold.

We have had a proud Superdome history right there on the corner of Poydras and Loyola, right across the street from city hall. It will be there for years to come because the heroic efforts of the employees at the Dome and our local contractors who put their shoulders to the wheel and their hearts into their work and decided that this would be a symbol of our rebirth.

I am proud as the Senator from the great State of Louisiana to come and honor them, to thank them, and to say that this is the beginning of our recovery. This week, we close a chapter on Hurricane Rita, which, Mr. President, hit your own State of Texas, and which did so much damage to both Louisiana and Texas. I visited Louisiana this past weekend with some of Louisiana's delegation and local leaders. It is clear that recovery has begun, but there is still a long way to go.

As we close the Rita and Katrina chapters of the last year, let the Saints go marching in tonight, and let them lead us to a new chapter of hope and recovery for New Orleans, for Louisiana, for the whole gulf coast, and for all of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). The Senator from Alabama.

#### BORDER FENCING

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the House and Senate have a piece of legislation more commonly known as the Fence bill, but it is really a bill to establish operational control of our borders through fencing and other means. It includes authorization for 700 specific miles fencing along the Mexican border and a study of the situation on the northern border. It is designed to help multiply the capacity of American Border Patrol agents to be effective in creating a lawful border instead of the unlawful border we have.

It passed the House with a strong bipartisan vote. They have had five for-

mal hearings on the matter and have considered information from previous hearings. They had a number of field hearings in August and they actually talked to people in the region to find out what is going on.

The House has sent the Senate a bill they have worked on for some time and to which they have given a great deal of thought. It is very similar to the bill we passed in the Senate which authorized 870 total miles of physical infrastructure at the border.

Let me take a moment to discuss the history of the legislation in this Senate dealing with barriers at the border. I will discuss why the barriers are an important component—not all of what we need to do, but an essential component of what we need to do—to create a lawful system of immigration. But first let us talk about the votes we have had in the Senate.

On May 17, I offered an amendment that mandated the construction of 370 miles of fencing and 500 miles of vehicle barriers along the southwest border of the United States. That is a total of 870 miles of physical barriers. This is not a lot different from what the House is sending the Senate, some 700 or so miles of fencing. When we voted on my amendment, we discussed it at some length.

I did not know how we would vote. I didn't know how the vote would turn out. A number of Members said they were for fencing; a number of Members said they were against fencing. I argued that good fences make good neighbors. It clarifies where property lines are, what your rights are, and neighbors can get along pretty well. Leave them ambiguous, and people get in fuses.

At any rate, when we voted, the vote was 83 to 16 to approve my amendment mandating construction of this fence. That was part of the overall immigration bill. That immigration bill was fatally flawed. The truth is, it is not going to become law. We can all be thankful for that.

This amendment, though, was voted on 83 to 16. A lot of our colleagues say, I voted for an amendment to build a fence; I voted as one of the 83. But, we all are grownups, we know that legislation containing that amendment is not going to become law. So, now it is time to either put up or shut up about enforcement. It is time to either be honest with our constituents and say, I am not going to vote for a stand alone fence bill, or, yes, I believe a fence is an important component of border security and I will vote for this bill because it takes the first step.

So where did the Senate go after the first vote of 83 to 13? I suggest that strong vote indicated border fencing and barriers are a high priority of this Senate. This was a strong bipartisan vote, if people were voting with integrity, to build a fence.

We had a second vote. One of the things that is unusual about the Senate, to people who are not used to it, is