

would amend 18 U.S.C. 1091, the Genocide Convention Implementation Act—the Proxmire Act—to allow prosecution of non-U.S. nationals who are in the United States for genocide committed outside the country. In the past, Federal investigators have identified perpetrators of genocide, including the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides, who have come to the United States under false pretenses and have found safe haven here. Unfortunately, the Justice Department has not been able to prosecute these individuals because the Proxmire Act only criminalizes genocide committed by U.S. nationals or in the United States.

The Genocide Accountability Act would close this loophole, allowing Federal prosecutors to prosecute those who have committed or incited genocide who are in our country. This change would make the genocide statute conform with numerous existing Federal crimes that allow for similar extraterritorial jurisdiction if the offender is found in the United States, including torture, piracy, material support to terrorists, terrorism financing, and hostage taking.

I commend Senators DURBIN and COBURN for holding a hearing on this important issue and for their diligent work to ensure that that this loophole in our law is closed. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to ensure that the United States takes this significant step in combating genocide worldwide.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD, without intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 888) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 888

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Genocide Accountability Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. GENOCIDE.

Section 1091 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

“(d) **REQUIRED CIRCUMSTANCE FOR OFFENSES.**—The circumstance referred to in subsections (a) and (c) is that—

“(1) the offense is committed in whole or in part within the United States;

“(2) the alleged offender is a national of the United States (as that term is defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101));

“(3) the alleged offender is an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States (as that term is defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101));

“(4) the alleged offender is a stateless person whose habitual residence is in the United States; or

“(5) after the conduct required for the offense occurs, the alleged offender is brought

into, or found in, the United States, even if that conduct occurred outside the United States.”.

Mr. DURBIN. 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.

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

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

**CATASTROPHIC DISASTER
RECOVERY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2007**

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I intend, in a few minutes, to call up a bill for passage, and I think I will be joined on the floor by Senator REID at the appropriate time. The bill I am going to speak about in a minute is the Catastrophic Disaster Recovery Fairness Act of 2007, which I am proud to co-sponsor with Senator LOTT and others. We have been working on trying to get this bill cleared, and I will come back to that in a moment, but before I call this bill up for final passage, I would like to speak for a moment about the emergency supplemental bill that we passed.

The Congress must—and usually does—and is required to take care of emergency issues. These are situations that, by the nature of emergencies, we cannot plan for. The war we are prosecuting and trying to win has extended well beyond the boundaries that many of us believed initially, so there are new costs associated with that war. There have been emergencies right here in the country that have taken place that could never have been predicted or anticipated.

We are still recovering, as you know, from two of those very terrible storms, two of the worst to ever hit the United States of America, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The aftermath of those storms was the multiple failure of a levee system that has protected this great community for over 300 years. It is not just any city or any region, it is a very special historic city and region, the city of New Orleans. It is also of great economic significance for the Nation.

We could not necessarily predict this in our regular budgets, and so it is appropriate that we provide emergency funding for emergencies, and that is what the supplemental is. It isn't a war spending bill, it is an emergency bill. There are things associated with the ongoing war in Iraq and Afghanistan that are emergencies, but there are things happening in the United States also that are emergencies.

For Senators to come to this floor and argue over the last 2 weeks that there are no emergencies in the United States that we need to take care of and that all we need to do is to focus on the war in Iraq, I would ask them to go home and talk to their constituents be-

cause that is not what my constituents are saying, Republicans and Democrats. I don't think that is what anyone is saying, any constituent in anybody's State. I think they are saying, whatever their feelings are about the war and how we should prosecute it, there are most certainly emergencies right here in the United States that need to be dealt with.

I am proud that many of us on the Democratic side, as well as some of our Republican friends, decided to put some money in this emergency supplemental bill to take care of real American emergencies right here on the home soil—right here in America. One of those emergencies is the ongoing attempts to rebuild the gulf coast, primarily in Louisiana and Mississippi, but we also have friends in the southern part of Texas who are still hurting and also in the southern part of Alabama and through some parts of Florida. So I like to always say we are fighting hard for the gulf coast and trying to rebuild the gulf coast.

This Congress has been generous, has been innovative, and has been trying to think outside of the box to respond to an unprecedented disaster. Again, the scope of this disaster is beyond anything we have attempted. You know the long and sorry record: When we went to call on FEMA, it showed up but it was weak, anemic, underled, and underresourced. When we called on the Red Cross, as respectable as that organization and that name is, and they have done remarkable work, they too were overwhelmed. This is a job that was beyond the ability of the tools that we normally have to rebuild, and so we have been scrambling as a Congress to redesign tools. Some we have done a good job on and some we haven't.

There is a lot of redtape we unwittingly created, and not with any ill intent, but that has been the consequences of many of the things we have passed. And so people are caught up in a lot of bureaucracy and a lot of redtape. There has been a lot of money thrown at them, which is very frustrating because they hear about it, they think they are going to get it, but they can't feel it because the bureaucracy has it basically tied up.

So part of what we have done in this supplemental, which is very good, is we have removed some of the redtape and added some additional funding where we thought we were short, so that the hundreds of thousands of people on the gulf coast who have lost their homes, who have lost their businesses, who have seen everything they have worked for, some for 50 years or 60 years, literally washed away by floodwaters or collapsed levees, they could have a chance to rebuild.

I feel very strongly about this. I have been very generous as an appropriator with help to foreign countries. I have helped send money to Afghanistan, to countries in Africa, and to South America. I was one of the first Senators on the ground when Hurricane

Mitch hit Honduras. I believe in helping people when they are in their hour of need. But I can tell you people on the gulf coast are starting to ask: Does anybody remember that we are here in the United States and we need help as well?

So that is what this supplemental bill did. Let me say a couple of things we tried to do in it.

We passed in this supplemental emergency spending bill for the United States of America a waiver of a 10-percent match. In every disaster, we require the locals to put up money. It makes sense, and normally it works, and that is appropriate. But in a case where the disaster is so catastrophic, let's say in St. Bernard Parish, which is the parish I represent, there were 67,000 people who lived there before the storm. It was a middle-class, working-class community. Every single home was destroyed. Every fire station was destroyed. Every police station was destroyed.

The sheriff had to swim out of the second floor with his deputies. He is a big, strong sheriff, thank goodness, and a good swimmer. If he wasn't, he would have drowned—Jack Stevens, my good friend. He swam out, literally saving his deputies. His headquarters was destroyed.

Now, I ask you: How is St. Bernard Parish going to come up with a 10-percent match? It sounds reasonable, but in this case it is not.

No. 2, these 10-percent waivers, or matches, have been waived before. In 32 of the last 38 disasters, they have been waived. I asked the administration and others to waive this one. They said "no." So we have done it now, as a matter of fact, in this bill. Congress said yes, it is right that this be waived. It will not only provide several hundred million dollars more in emergency disaster money for Louisiana and Mississippi, but, most importantly, it will completely eliminate the 10-percent match requirement which is required on each individual project worksheet.

Now, somebody may ask how many project worksheets we have, which means how many individual public entities have requested rebuilding, whether it is a library or half a library; a wing of a school or a whole school; a light post or a sewer system. We have 23,000 of those project worksheets pending for Louisiana alone. Because of this 10-percent requirement, there is a NEPA review, a FEMA review, a HUD review—we are being reviewed to death. We can't do this in this fashion. We have to waive this 10 percent.

Not only will \$750 million be immediately available, but more than the money, the redtape goes away. Ninety percent of the redtape goes away, and we can actually do what we say we are going to do, which is rebuilding the gulf coast, one fire station, one police station, one library at a time. This is not theory, this is practical. If you want to rebuild a city, you have to rebuild the fire stations, you have to re-

build the police stations, you have to actually rebuild homes, pave streets, et cetera, et cetera. All of this is at a slow crawl because of this 10 percent.

So I am proud of my colleagues who voted for this supplemental, because we waived this big piece of redtape, and I wish to thank them. I hope the President does not veto this bill because of that. I hope to be negotiating with the President and the administration in good faith to perhaps explain some things he is not quite understanding about the difficulty we are facing in the gulf coast and see if he can work with us to keep this waiver in place.

In addition, we put in the supplemental \$1.3 billion for levees. One of the most memorable speeches the President made was in Jackson Square, and I was pleased he came down right after the storms and spoke in Jackson Square when there weren't many lights on in the whole region. We put up lights that night for that speech. Generators were brought in to turn the lights on so the President could be seen when he made the speech. The rest of the French Quarter was completely dark. If you were in the city that night he made that speech, you wouldn't have been able to see your hand in front of your face, but the world saw the President because we got generators to turn those lights on so he could be seen. When he stood there in the dark, he said he would do whatever his administration needed to do to rebuild the levees in this metropolitan area.

I am not talking about little rinky-dink levees, I am talking about federally authorized levees that collapsed because they were not funded correctly, they were not maintained correctly, and the Corps of Engineers has admitted it was their fault and they need to fix it. Where I come from, if you break something, you fix it. The Corps of Engineers' levees collapsed, and they need to fix them.

So here comes the supplemental request, and lo and behold there is no new money for levees. We get a request from the administration that it wanted to move \$1.3 billion from one set of projects to another, claiming this set of projects isn't ready to go, and they want to move it from the east bank to the west bank. Senator VITTER and I discussed this, and we said "no." The days of moving money from the east bank to the west bank, in hopes that next year we would come back and find some new money for the east bank, are over with. We did that for the last 40 years, and then 18 months ago New Orleans and the surrounding area went underwater.

No more moving the money. No more shell games. This supplemental says "no," and we put in an additional \$1.3 billion. We are not moving levee monies from one of our constituent groups to another constituent group in hopes we will come back next year and fill in the pot. It is akin to musical chairs. You keep moving chairs, and when the music stops, somebody is going to be

without a chair. I am not doing that anymore.

Every person in south Louisiana and in Mississippi who deserves a federally protected levee is going to get it. Those levees are going to hold, and we are not moving this money around anymore. So that money is in the supplemental, and I thank Senator BYRD and Senator MURRAY and Senator DORGAN particularly for their strong support of that principle.

Two more things, and then I will call up this bill for discussion.

We also got some funding—and I thank Senator KENNEDY particularly for his help in this—for recruiting teachers. I can't tell you how difficult it has been for our teachers, our parents, and our students. We did have a happy success story, though, regarding education. Since I have talked about things that didn't work, let me spend a minute talking about something that did work.

On Monday morning, when the city of New Orleans was 80 percent underwater, and we looked up and millions of people had fled their homes along the gulf coast, we realized there were about 330,000 children who had no school to go to on Monday morning. I want that to sink in for a minute. There were 330,000 children, from kindergarten to 12th grade, who had no school to go to on Monday morning. That was a problem, and we had no solution for it.

There was no tool in the toolbox. FEMA didn't have a plan. There was nothing we could do. So we thought for a minute, and between the work of this Congress, the administration, and the good people down in Louisiana and Mississippi, we came up with a plan that basically said this: If every parent will show up at a school and get your child registered, the Federal Government will send that school a check. Don't worry about it. You don't have to pay for it, we will take care of it.

It was a most extraordinary effort because, you know what, it worked. For the most part, after this major disaster, almost all of those 330,000 children actually attended school somewhere last year and the schools were actually reimbursed. So when people tell me Congress can't do anything well, I like to point this out, to say: Yes, sometimes we actually manage to do something really well. And that worked.

What we failed to realize, though, is it was not just the tuition for the children we had to send—whether they left parochial school and went to public or public school and went to parochial, we covered it, no questions asked. But what we didn't think about is what happens to the thousands of teachers whose schools were ruined, whose homes were flooded, whose churches were destroyed, and they had to move—but they want to come back now and teach—how do we get them to come back and live in a community that is so destroyed? What incentives can we give them to come back?

Many of these teachers are very dedicated, and many of them have come back under harsh conditions. But we think it might be wise, when you are trying to rebuild from a nuclear bomb explosion—and we hope that never happens—or a dirty bomb or Tsunami or major terrorist attack or perhaps just a terrible storm or tornado or hurricane, if you have to rebuild a devastated area, you need to encourage some key people to come back: doctors, nurses, teachers. We have some money in this bill to give the appropriate incentives for teachers to come back.

We are not just going to build the old school system we had which was failing students and disappointing parents and not really a very successful story. We are in the process, with the help of Republicans and Democrats here, of building a new kind of public school system.

So this money in this supplemental will help us to recruit quality teachers, to acknowledge what we are asking of them. Teaching under normal circumstances is difficult. To teach children in a classroom that is a temporary and sometimes wholly inadequate structure, where these children are living in trailers at night, where the teachers themselves have to live in 16-by-8 trailers—the least we could do is give them some financial incentive to just make it through the next year or two until we can stabilize the situation and rebuild the infrastructure of this city. I am excited about that.

I am not going to go into any more detail about the historic preservation funding. Obviously, people in America know that New Orleans and south Louisiana have some of the most historic structures in the Nation and that they are at risk. This additional funding helps us preserve that.

We also have some funding in here for our fisheries. Our fishermen are small businesspeople, many of them. They don't work on the land; they work on the water. They don't work in an office; they work on their boats. Their boats were destroyed. We don't think of them as businesspeople, but they are. Our disaster assistance has to take care of our farmers, our ranchers, our urban and rural—and our fisheries. We have determined we had not done enough for them and for their needs, so we have some money to help them.

People say: Where do we get this funding? It comes off budget. This country is a great country. It is one of the great benefits of belonging to a great and powerful nation—if your region gets devastated, the rest of the country's money will be pooled to help you. If something happens—and it did in New York—we all pool our resources to help out. Now New York is doing magnificently. There was a question, after 9/11, as to what would happen, but because we all helped and they did a great job, that area is being rebuilt. Even though we still mourn the loss of those 3,000 Americans who lost their lives and it is still a very sad thing for us to think about, we are proud of helping to rebuild that great city.

If something were to happen, Mr. President, in your State—and your State is a coastal State as well; you have had your share of disasters—even though your State is tiny and you might not be able to bail yourself out, you are part of a great nation that will step up and help you as well.

I would like to speak for a minute about the Catastrophic Disaster Recovery Fairness Act. I will ask, at the appropriate time, for this bill to be called up and to clear it by unanimous consent. This particular bill was not included in the supplemental. It has not been included in any other major legislation. This bill will eliminate a great barrier to construction of homes in the gulf coast.

People ask me all the time: Senator, how is it possible that we have sent over \$100 billion and yet we cannot seem to get massive rebuilding underway? This is one of the answers, and I hope I can explain this simply and clearly because it will help people understand.

The Small Business Administration, in a disaster, will lend money to people if they qualify for a small business disaster loan, and 81,000 people in my State qualified and have received approval for a loan—81,000. That is a huge number of homes. That is not all the homes which were destroyed. We had 250,000 homes destroyed. Of those, 81,000 families qualified for a home loan through the Small Business Administration.

It was painfully slow. It took months for these applications to get out, with us beating them every day and working with them and pushing, pushing, with Senator KERRY and Senator SNOWE, who were, together, terrific to push the SBA. Then we got rid of the SBA Director, we got a new SBA Director, and they pushed those loans out the door. The good news is 81,000 people have gotten loans. The bad news is that as soon as these same people get their Road Home grants, which they are entitled to under another program we created, the SBA is interpreting their law so as to require these homeowners to immediately pay back their loan.

This bill which I am sponsoring with Senator LOTT will release the homeowners, the borrowers, from that obligation. They must repay the loan. This is not a loan-forgiveness program. If you borrowed money, you must repay it under the terms you borrowed it. This is not a charity. This is not loan forgiveness. You must repay it under the terms of your loan. But you don't have to pay it today. You don't have to pay it next week when you get your Road Home money. You can pay it under the terms that it was lent to you, whether it was 5 years or 20 years, whether it was at 2 percent or 4 percent or 6 percent.

Mr. President, 81,000 people in Louisiana and 31,000 people in Mississippi have been told: The good news is you got an SBA loan; the bad news is the minute you get your Road Home Pro-

gram money from the Federal Government, you have to pay this loan in full.

Believe me, this was not our intention when we passed these community development block grants. I do not believe there is a Senator in this Chamber who would expect that of a homeowner who has lost everything. In some cases, they had insurance. In some cases, they didn't. In most cases, neither their insurance nor the money we are giving them is making them whole. There is no coverage for contents. This is not for contents. Some people might have \$100,000 of contents in their home. Some people might have \$200,000 of contents. Some people might have only \$25,000 of contents. We are not even covering contents.

We are not covering the expedited or accelerated cost of labor and materials. So people are already with no coverage for contents. Unless they had insurance, they have lost that. We are not covering the 30-percent increase in labor costs or the 30-percent increase in cost of supplies. That is not calculated.

This loan is very important for people. It is saving many of them from bankruptcy. If they manage to get their loan, we most certainly do not want them to have to pay their loan back in full when they get their Road Home grant. This is for Louisiana and for Mississippi. If you add up 81,000 people in Louisiana and 31,000, this is over 100,000 families—110,000 families. That is probably affecting more than a quarter of a million people. That is a lot of people.

When this bill passes, which it will—it may not pass today, but I wish it would. I wish no one would object to it. But when this bill passes, 250,000 people are actually going to be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and they will be able to say: This is hard. I don't know if I can rebuild. I don't know if I want to rebuild. But at least I have a fighting chance to make that decision. If this bill does not pass, these 200,000-plus people who live in my State and Mississippi—I predict many of them will have to file bankruptcy.

I have said this before and I am going to say it again. The people I represent who lived behind these levees were not sunbathing when these levees broke. They were loading tankers on the river. They were working at the docks. They were drilling and exploring for oil and gas in the gulf. They were going to work at hospitals and nursing homes and teaching and running our libraries. This is not a resort community. These levees were not protecting a beach. These levees were protecting a port, and the levees failed.

In working-class neighborhoods, Black and White, in rich and poor neighborhoods, people's homes were destroyed, homes that had never had an inch of water. Let me repeat that. People's homes were destroyed, homes that had never had an inch of water. They were not in a flood plain.

When you lose everything you have—and for most Americans, their largest

asset is their home—it is our obligation to think about ways we can strengthen the insurance system; strengthen our levees so they do not break again and while people are struggling give them a hand.

Again, I am not asking for loan forgiveness. They have to pay back every penny. But let's give them a fighting chance to pay it back, over 10 years or 15 years. Let's not require them to take one grant program we have given them to build their home and the same day take it away because they have to fully pay their small business loan.

I understand Senator REID is going to call up this bill and try to get it passed. I surely hope nobody objects to it. It is a Landrieu-Lott bill, with Senator VITTER as well. Senator REID is going to call it up in a few minutes, and I hope nobody objects to it. But if they do object, I can promise you I am going to spend every day on the floor until this bill is passed, sometime before we go home—not this week but before we go home for the next break.

I do not think this is unreasonable. We are going to ask for everybody's support. Senator LOTT will be happy to explain, when he has an opportunity, about the 31,000 families in Mississippi. But I am going to leave this here, and Senator REID is going to come down and ask it be passed. I hope we can get it done today. If not, we will ask for it tomorrow. If not, we will continue to ask for it until we get it.

We are asking for fairness, not charity, and for justice for the people in the gulf coast.

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

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

ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise this evening to talk about House bill H.R. 137, which has a companion Senate bill, S. 261, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act. This is legislation that both the House and Senate have had much discussion on in the last several years, and something I hope will make its way to the consent calendar and final action this evening.

I come to the floor tonight as someone who has been a cosponsor of this legislation for several years now, and as someone who has seen the impact of animal fighting in the state of Washington where animal fighting organizations have not only been a source of all sorts of cruel and inhumane treatment of animals, but also other illegal activity. To me this is legislation that is much needed, and we have passed similar legislation in the State of Washington. It is something we should have a strong Federal statute on.

During October of 2004, there was a major raid in Vancouver, WA, where

police found 21 pit bulls, as well as training logs and other evidence of animal fighting. It got quite a bit of attention as well because there were very high-profile people involved with the animal fighting ring.

There is a long list of other incidents that have happened in Washington State, other activity in Yakima, WA, where various animal fighting organizations were discovered by law enforcement who have done a terrific job of uprooting these organizations in our State. It is important we take an aggressive stance and pass this legislation.

The House bill we are talking about, H.R. 137, recently passed the House of Representatives, I believe with over 300 cosponsors. I am sure it had quite a few others who actually supported the legislation as it passed. We have over 35 cosponsors here with S. 261.

When I look at the legislative history of this bill, it has had remarkably broad bipartisan support. It was passed by both the House and the Senate in the past. It was passed in both Chambers in 2001 and then struck in the conference report. It passed in 2003 in the Senate. It passed in 2005 again in the Senate, a unanimous measure. As I mentioned, it passed the House of Representatives. I think it is fitting that it should be on our consent calendar and hopefully pass this body this evening.

The bottom line is, there are many organizations across the country that have seen the inhumane treatment of animals and have supported this legislation. The American Veterinary Medical Association supports the bill, obviously. The National Sheriffs Association supports this legislation. Police departments have been working in every part of the country and have endorsed this legislation because they see what kind of criminal activity is associated with animal fighting—gambling, drugs, and in one case in Washington State actual murder. The Federal antianimal fighting legislation is important. While we already have a Federal statute on the books, what we don't have is a Federal statute that effectively helps law enforcement meet this growing challenge. That is, with a simple misdemeanor, which is currently on the Federal books, sometimes it takes law enforcement as many as 7 to 8 months to investigate these kinds of crimes. To investigate and put that kind of energy into fighting this kind of criminal activity in our States, and then to have a maximum penalty of only up to 1 year is not adequate.

In fact, in Washington State, in response to the activities that occurred in Vancouver and other parts of our State, our Governor signed an antianimal fighting bill that has been a great model for what we should be doing at the Federal level. As Washington did, this bill would make sure this crime is a felony and that it has adequate penalties. In fact, when the current Federal animal fighting law

was enacted in 1976, only one State made it a felony. Today dogfighting is a felony in 48 States. We need to make sure that it is also a felony at the Federal level for transporting these animals and products associated with animal fighting across State lines. In fact, we are seeing that in many cases.

In Washington State and in Oregon, we have seen this activity, because people in several States are joining together to locate and to make a profit and make investments in these kinds of criminal activities.

We want to make sure we are stamping out this activity. With this legislation, we believe we have a very good chance to say that the Federal Government views this kind of animal fighting as cruel and inhumane, that we consider it a serious criminal activity to drug and force animals to fight and then to enclose them in pits while spectators engage in all sorts of gambling, narcotics trafficking, public corruption, and, in some cases, even violence toward people. That is something we ought to take a tough stance against.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. I hope we can consider it in tonight's consent calendar, given how the Judiciary Committee has supported this legislation, and how it has passed both the House and Senate in the past.

EASTER

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the poet Alfred Edward Housman, 1859–1936, wrote in his poem, "A Shropshire Lad," the following verse:

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

The trees are in bloom. In Washington, the annual cherry blossom festival begins this Saturday, March 31, and runs through April 15. It is always a beautiful sight, whether viewed under warm and sunny skies or as the blossoms fall like rain on a misty morning. It is a lovely celebration of Spring and a welcome complement to Easter.

This year Easter falls on April 8, when the Senate will not be in session. Each year, of course, Easter falls on a different day, sometimes with many weeks' difference from year to year. Easter is a very moveable feast and has been throughout its long history. The calculation of when to celebrate Easter has varied through the centuries, being settled for just over 1,427 years by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. But even today, Easter remains a moveable feast.

The Roman Emperor Constantine convoked the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. to resolve a number of important differences between the religious practices across his empire. The council decided that the Easter festival should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox, thus eternally linking the return of spring with the resurrection of Christ. If the full moon occurred on a