

are supposed to get this done before we leave. We will never get it done if every Senator on the Republican side who dreams up another debate topic is given another half day or 2 days to pursue it.

At some point, leadership involves responsibility. At this point, I think the Republicans are being irresponsible because they refuse to let us do the people's business. They want to protect the status quo. They don't want this to change. They want to make this a do-nothing Congress just like the last Congress, when they were in charge. We are trying our best to avoid that. The honest answer may be that we need more votes on this side of the aisle so we can stop this, so we can move ahead and make some real changes in farm policy and tax policy. We would not reach that point if the Republican strategy continues—filibusters and blocking, coming up with excuses, and spending months on a bill that should have taken days.

That is their plan, their policy. That is what they believe in. That is the best they can offer the American people. That is why the Republican Party leadership in the Congress has been summarily rejected by the American people. They are sick of it. They want bipartisan cooperation, progress, and they want change.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with Senator AKAKA speaking for up to 5 minutes, Senator MENENDEZ for up to 15 minutes, Senator MURRAY for up to 5 minutes, and Senator WYDEN for up to 5 minutes.

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

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

#### COMMENDING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII WARRIOR FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the University of Hawaii Warrior football team, which completed the first undefeated season in the team's history, securing a first-ever appearance in the Sugar Bowl on New Year's Day.

Facing powerful schools from across the country, this dedicated, hard working, selfless team found the courage, strength and discipline to emerge victorious from every challenge. A spirit of support and teamwork, as well as confidence under pressure, made this historic undefeated season possible.

In addition to their victories on the field, the Warrior football players have also introduced viewers to the diverse cultures they represent. They have become positive role models for young people not only in Hawaii, but in Samoa, Australia, around the South

Pacific and in communities across the United States.

They have made many people proud. They honor the people and land of Hawaii before every game. They have shared our unique culture with the world.

The Warriors have brought the people of Hawaii together, united in supporting this incredible team that continues to defy the odds. I join the people of Hawaii in congratulating the University of Hawaii Warrior football team and rooting for victory in the Sugar Bowl New Year's Day in New Orleans.

As we say in Hawaii, "Hana Hou," do it again! Go Warriors!

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### COUNTY PAYMENTS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues, especially Senator MURRAY and Senator MENENDEZ, for their courtesy. I will be brief.

Today the House and Senate announced a historic package to address the energy crisis facing our Nation. But in addition, as part of that important legislation, the agreement contains more than \$1.8 billion in desperately needed funding for our Nation's rural schools, counties, and communities.

Without the safety net funding provided as part of the energy legislation, rural communities across this country could literally be wiped off the map. Without this critical funding, rural counties across America will once again be staring down into a precipice and a future filled with closed schools, terminated services, and deteriorating roads. Within months, pink slips could again be sent to teachers and to county workers.

Fortunately, some help for those rural communities is now on the way. The energy package contains an extension of the Secure Rural Schools Program that I authored in 2000. This proposal closely mirrors the legislative proposal that was crafted with Senators BAUCUS, BINGAMAN, REID, and myself, a proposal that passed overwhelmingly in this body by a 74-to-23 vote as an amendment that I offered to the war emergency supplemental spending bill last spring.

Specifically, the new energy package provides 4 more years of funding for the Secure Rural Schools Program, commonly known as the County Payments Program. A year of full funding for the payment in lieu of taxes program has also been included. By providing funds through 2011, this deal gets our rural counties off the fiscal roller coaster and back to stable funding so they can get at the real work of planning for the future. Today's announcement would mean \$1.8 billion in critical funding for school and road programs across America.

In our home State of Oregon, particularly when folks are suffering because

of the bad weather, it would mean hundreds of millions of dollars for schools and public safety, roads, and other essential county services. This program has been a successful one. It has been built around collaboration among counties, environmentalists, timber interests, and others, and the funds are absolutely critical to our rural communities.

The legislation that has been agreed to today, the Energy bill, is very important to our country's future. But equally important is the legislation known as the County Payments Program for rural communities.

I am grateful to my colleague, Senator MURRAY, and Senator MENENDEZ, who have been waiting patiently for the chance to make this announcement, and it is my hope that with the unflagging support of rural folks from across the country that this much-needed energy legislation will move forward and the country can look to a brighter future for rural communities. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### WASHINGTON STATE FLOODS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from New Jersey for allowing me to speak before he does. I wish to speak today because, as we all know, in the last several days, the Pacific Northwest has been hit by devastating storms. We have seen wind and dangerous floods and mud slides that have cut off our roads, our homes, cut off power to literally thousands in my State.

Today, the pouring rain thankfully has subsided a bit, but thousands of people are coping with the damage in my State, in my region. We will not know the full impact of this storm for some time, but our Governor has already estimated that the cost is going to be in the billions of dollars.

My heart goes out to everyone in my home State of Washington and in Oregon who are coping with the aftermath of this tremendous storm. Those people are in my thoughts constantly. I am working with all of our State, local, and Federal entities to be sure everyone gets all the service and support they need at this critical time.

I especially thank and mention our Governor, Governor Gregoire of Washington State. She has been very strong in her leadership throughout this disaster and has been working tirelessly to coordinate the rescue efforts.

I especially today send a very heartfelt thanks to all of our rescue workers. They have been working out in these torrential rains, night and day, rescuing people from flooded homes and vehicles. They have been flying in supplies to people who are stranded. They have been working very hard to clear roads and railways that are still tonight swamped.

So far, the Navy, the Coast Guard, the National Guard, and all of our