

amendments will be in order. I just hope the Senator from Alabama will allow this to move forward when we propound it again.

Again, I understand very well the concerns he has. That is why the unanimous consent agreement calls for simply relevant amendments, with no time limit. I think the stark political reality around here, as the Senator from Alabama knows, is that we are not coming back in until Wednesday. If the Senator from Alabama and others who object just have numerous amendments, there is no way we are going to be able to get a bill passed and then into conference with the House and move forward. So I thank the Senator from Alabama for his consideration. I understand his concerns. I look forward very much to working with him.

I yield and I thank my colleague from Montana for his indulgence.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

COMMENDATION OF MONTANA WILDFIRE FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a matter that has impacted every inhabitant of the state of Montana: The wildfires of the past 2 months. The recent rain and snow have finally brought the fires in Montana under control, but many of the largest fires are still smoldering.

The Helena Independent Record Recently described the summer of 2000 as a:

Fire season marked by miracles and loss, heroism and heartache, smoky skies and blackened backyards, of evacuations, waiting, planning and prayer.

This photo showing two elk trying to escape the flames was taken on August 6th in the Bitterroot Valley by Forest Service firefighter John McColgan. On this particular day several forest fires converged near Sula, burning over 100,000 acres and destroying 10 homes. And this fire was just one of dozens burning across Montana.

Mr. President, it is not an exaggeration to say that these fires impacted every inhabitant of Montana. Even people in our cities, miles from the front lines, lived with a constant reminder of the conflagration burning about them.

As you can see in this photo of Helena, cities all across the region spent weeks under a cloud of smoke.

Clearly, it was one of the worst fire seasons we've seen in the last 100 years.

This is our cathedral, Saint Helena's Cathedral. You can see big smoke columns rising. The fact is, this is dramatically an understatement. I have asked my office to see if there are other photos which more accurately describe the situation in my State, and this is all we could come up with at the time. But this town, Helena, I might say, was so covered with smoke that my house—up just about 500, 600 feet from here—as I was looking across the back alley through the kitchen win-

dow, I could not even see across the alley. The whole city was just covered all the way down to ground level with smoke. That was the rule. That was the rule for all Montana cities, with the exception maybe of some of the eastern Montana cities. Most of them had just dense smoke impact for a long time. Clearly one of the worst fire seasons we have seen in over 100 years.

But, Mr. President, I didn't come to the floor to talk about how bad the fires were—that's already apparent. Nor did I come down here to talk about forest management policy and what we could have done to lessen the harmful impact of these fires—there will be plenty of time to address both topics in the weeks and months to come.

Mr. President, I am here today to commend the efforts of the thousands of people who pulled together to do battle with one of Mother Nature's most unforgiving forces.

From New Zealand's finest, most experienced firefighters to the Montana volunteers who ran Red Cross evacuee camps, the fires brought together some of the most courageous and hard-working individuals I have ever encountered.

Someone once told me that the true character of any community will reveal itself in the face of a natural disaster. I am proud of how Montanans and all of those who came to help rose to this challenge and persevered.

Of all the statistics—almost a million acres burned, over 300 structures lost, over \$200 million spent in battling fires—the one statistic I am most proud of is the number of human casualties—zero. That's right, in Montana not one life was lost during this disaster and no one was seriously injured.

I can't tell you how proud I am that safety remained the highest priority: of all of the firefighters who were in harm's way, the pilots who flew risky missions dumping water or retardant chemicals over the fiery landscape, and the thousands of people who were evacuated—no one was seriously injured. To me, that's one heck of a statistic.

That's why today, Mr. President, I want to extend a heartfelt "thank you," and I know I speak for every Montanan.

I want to thank firefighters from across the country, and around the world. Volunteer firefighters who left their regular jobs. The employees who let them go. Students who postponed attending classes. The families left at home and the co-workers who put in overtime to cover for those who traveled to the west.

I might say in this photo, in the center is James Lee Witt, flanked by two members of the Montana delegation, myself on the left, and Senator BURNS on the right. We are talking to a volunteer firefighter.

These are people who, when the fire comes, often are in an area next to a community—there are homes back in the woods and the volunteer fighters immediately rush out. They are the

first ones there. They are there without any pay. It is their community and they are fighting their hearts out. They are bleeding, almost literally—doing all they can to prevent that structure from burning, to do all they can to force the fire back. They are not paid. It is without compensation. The Forest Service and smokejumpers are; there are others who are not paid. The others are not. They are the first there and often the last to leave. They are just into it because it is their community.

I called James Lee Witt, pictured in the center of this photo. He very quickly got some regulations changed so volunteer firefighters could be reimbursed. Recently now they are receiving payment for the services they rendered. But the point is, people came from all over. Employers let volunteers leave work—it was lost work, but still the main job had to be done fighting these fires. Students postponed attending classes at the University of Montana, or other classes, families left at home, coworkers who put in overtime to cover those who traveled to the West.

The Red Cross and its hundreds of volunteers who were there when folks needed to see a friendly face. The various state agencies that worked diligently and expeditiously to implement emergency plans. The federal agencies that came forward to help put the fires out and begin to rebuild these communities.

Specifically, I'd like to commend FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency for their efforts. On several occasions, they quickly released federal funds or waived personnel requirements. Cutting red tape so we could get the assistance we needed right away.

I especially thank FEMA Director James Lee Witt who spent countless hours working with me and other folks in Montana. When these fires started to blow in Montana, James Lee Witt said he was really booked up with other plans, but he dramatically changed his schedule so he could come to Montana. That made a huge difference in getting agencies to work together, and it cut so much of this red-tape. FEMA is still working on recovery efforts, and we very much appreciate all they have done and continue to do.

I also thank with the same enthusiasm the adjutant general of the Montana National Guard, Gene Prendergast, and all his troops. Gene really stepped up. This guy really cares. He mobilized his troops, who care just as much. He was also influential in working with Federal, State, and local agencies to coordinate plans and requests for Federal assistance. We owe Gene Prendergast a huge debt of gratitude.

At the high point of the fires, there were well over 12,000 people fighting blazes in western Montana. That includes Forest Service firefighters and

National Guard men and women. We had 3 active-duty battalions from the East coming to fight fires in Montana. People came from everywhere—from 48 States and 3 countries—to Montana. Across the West, some 30,000 brave individuals battled wildfires during this season.

We did not lose any lives in our State, thanks to the combination of solid training, sensible fire strategy, and good luck. The dangers faced by these individuals, however, were obviously real. Think of the danger we put people into.

Last year, we took time to remember the Mann Gulch fire. That was a huge fire in Montana which blew up about 50 years ago. Thirteen National Forest Service smoke jumpers died in that blowup. They were fighting a fire 10 miles away from Helena, 10 miles from the photo I showed earlier. It was not thought to be a fire that was going to threaten lives or property. An observer described the Mann Gulch fire with these words:

A terrific draft of superheated air of tremendous velocity had swept up the hill exploding all inflammable material, causing a wall of flame 600 feet high to roll over the ridge and down the other side and continue over ridges and down gulches until the fuels were so light that the wall could not maintain enough heat to continue. This wall covered 3,000 acres in 10 minutes. Anything caught in the direct path of the heat blast perished.

Just 6 years ago, we lost 14 smoke jumpers in a similar firestorm near Glenwood Springs, CO. This fire, like the Mann Gulch, was considered routine, and these were not even the most deadly fires in the West's history. It is important to remember those who gave their lives fighting wildfires. It is also important to celebrate those who put their lives on the line day after day to keep our homes and communities safe.

A simple thank you does not seem to be enough to show our appreciation for these people and for everything they have done. That is why I have come to the floor to announce I am introducing legislation to honor and commemorate the selfless sacrifices each of these individuals has made to keep our families and our homes safe.

The legislation will direct the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Department of Defense to work together to create a commemorative pin or badge that will be issued to each firefighter at the end of a fire season. This will serve as an emblem of the vital service they have provided and a symbol of our gratitude, much as a soldier might receive a band to record a tour of duty, because those who fight wildfires really are soldiers who put their lives on the line every day in defense of the people, communities, the lands of America. These courageous men and women need to be recognized as the heroes they are.

As we properly focus on the work these brave firefighters do for us, let us

not forget the work we must do for them, for it is only by creating and funding sensible forest management policy and by guiding development to reduce the risk to homes and property posed by wildfires that we can keep more of our firefighters out of harm's way and prevent future tragedies like Mann Gulch.

As we commemorate our firefighters, let us make sure we rise to the task of putting aside our differences and working together for commonsense policies that will keep our forests healthy and firefighters safe.

Again, I say thank you, thank you to all the heroes—firefighters, volunteers, Government employees, ordinary citizens—who pulled together to protect life and home in Montana and across the West. Please know that we are truly grateful for everything you have done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, before my colleague from Montana leaves the floor, I commend him for his fine remarks. Connecticut is a long way geographically from the State of Montana. The Nation was transfixed over this past summer watching events unfold in the West and particularly in his State where so many millions of acres were engulfed in flames.

I express the strong feelings of all of us across the country on the tremendous work these firefighters have done and note further that we just passed as part of the Defense authorization bill a provision, the Fire Act, which will, for the first time, provide financial resources much along the lines of the COPS programs for fire departments, the 30,000 of them that exist in this country—volunteer, paid, and combination departments—to assist local communities and States in providing the sophisticated technology today which firefighters need, particularly the volunteer departments, where chemical and toxic substances and the tragedies of this summer demand a talent, education, and training unlike people even imaged a few years ago.

I commend the Senator from Montana for his fine work and express my sincere thanks to him and the fine people of Montana as well for a job well done.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SSSIONS). The motion to proceed.

I believe the Senator has a time request to propound.

Mr. DODD. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

OPPOSITION TO CUBA PROVISIONS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I express my strong opposition and disappointment with the outcome of last night's Agriculture appropriations conference report with respect to U.S.-Cuba pol-

icy. It is rather ironic that those who rail against Fidel Castro's dictatorial behavior seem to have adopted some of his tendencies; namely, a willingness to abuse the democratic process and go against the will of the majority in the Congress.

The proposed changes in the bill with respect to the sale of food to Cuba are modest at best since these exports can only be financed using third-country private commercial credit or cash. Such restrictive financing terms are a major hurdle for American exporters to overcome and are likely to significantly discourage any significant increases in such exports.

With respect to the codification of existing travel restrictions on Americans wishing to travel to Cuba, I think this action is shameful and irresponsible. I predict the authors of this provision will live to regret deeply having taken away this and future administrations' discretion to grant licenses on a case-by-case basis in circumstances that do not fall into the now codified categories of permissible travel.

I also believe that Cuban Americans who want to keep in touch with their family members in Cuba are going to be extremely critical of the fact that their ability to visit loved ones is now frozen in statute.

I say to the authors of this provision that they are only kidding themselves if they think this is going to stop Cuban Americans who are determined to visit their family members in Cuba several times a year from doing so. Sadly, they are going to encourage otherwise law-abiding individuals to break the law. I think that is regrettable.

I am supportive of other provisions of this legislation which will dramatically loosen the licensing and financing restrictions on sales of food and medicine to other countries that have been designated as terrorist states—North Korea, Iran, Sudan, and Libya. I strongly believe food and medicine should not be used as a sanctions tool, since the impact of denying such sales falls most heavily on innocent men, women, and children in these countries.

This is not to confuse our sincere and deep objections and strong opposition to the Governments of North Korea, Iran, Sudan, and Libya. But, it is not an American tradition to take food and medicine and make them a sanctions tool on a unilateral basis. We have understood in the past that you do not blame the innocent civilians of populations for the cruel regimes of their dictators and rulers. It is not in the American spirit to say to an innocent child—in any one of these countries—that if we are able to get food and medicine to you, you ought to be denied it as a tool of U.S. foreign policy.

I find it appalling that Cuba has been singled out, because in this bill we now say food and medicine can go to North Korea, Iran, Sudan, and Libya, but not to a little country of 11 million people 90 miles off our shore. I think that is