

recover some degree of normalcy in their lives, even as they face daunting odds—roofs open to the sky, shattered windows, no air conditioning, their possessions scattered and broken.

Every June 1, the citizens in my State prepare for another hurricane season. Some have lived in Florida all their lives and are very well versed in hurricane procedures. Some are new residents and have never been through a large storm. Nothing, however, could have prepared Floridians for the recent series of devastating events which started with Tropical Storm Bonnie striking the panhandle in early August, followed by Hurricane Charley crashing into Florida's west coast on August 13, and continued with Hurricane Frances attacking the entire State this past weekend. Now we are tracking Hurricane Ivan, which is again headed in our direction.

It is remarkable that these massive storms, which impacted nearly all of the 67 counties in the State of Florida, have caused only 29 confirmed fatalities. Hurricane Charley, a category 4 storm with winds in excess of 135 miles per hour, and Hurricane Frances, a category 2 storm with winds near 100 miles per hour, could have been much deadlier. However, while human losses were mercifully low, Florida's infrastructure suffered greatly.

Now we must move forward and look toward cleaning up and rebuilding our homes and businesses. I applaud the Senate's quick approval of supplemental appropriations of \$2 billion in emergency assistance through both FEMA and the Small Business Administration. After responding to these major events in my State as well as the recent tropical storm in Virginia, FEMA is stretched extremely thin and needs an influx of funds to keep operations up and running and planning for the long-term recovery.

In the last three weeks alone, FEMA has issued over \$100 million in individual assistance funds to Florida residents. Over \$2.7 million of that has already been allocated for Hurricane Frances' victims, while the storm is still moving up the Eastern seaboard. The SBA has already approved over \$23 million in disaster loans from Charley and with a filing deadline for assistance extended until October 12, 2004, we expect that number to increase exponentially.

The supplemental appropriations bill passed yesterday is only the first installment of badly needed funds for recovery. We must get an accurate assessment of the damage and determine the appropriate amount of funding needed and the appropriate Federal agencies to assist specific sectors of the State in rebuilding.

The physical infrastructure needs must be determined. How much damage did the road network suffer? Early estimates from Charley alone total over \$65 million for the Federal-aid system. Several Florida airports sustained major damage, which totals nearly \$34

million. These are just a few quick estimates. Across the board, we need to determine the extent of damage to Florida's infrastructure from both Charley and Frances—the highway and transit network, airports, seaports and schools.

Additionally, our Florida growers have been devastated. Early estimates top \$225 million in citrus losses for Charley alone, with over 40 percent of the citrus crop lost. It is too early to tell, but losses from Frances could top \$300 million. The crop insurance program will not be able to cover losses of this magnitude. Congress must step in to help Florida farmers.

These examples are just a small snapshot of the needs of our State. As we determine the amount of damage in other areas, we will need to appropriate funds for other Federal agencies, such as Army Corps of Engineers, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Department of Defense, NASA and others.

We must move quickly to put together an accurate assessment of the impact that these storms have had on the State of Florida and respond to this need with adequate Federal funding. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming days to achieve this goal.

THE BENIGNO FAMILY AND BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

Mr. CORZINE. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Benigno family of Clifton, NJ, for their tireless efforts to advance the cause of brain injury research.

Nearly 20 years ago, Dennis and Rosalind Benigno's 15-year-old son, Dennis John, was struck by a car while walking home from a football physical. Dennis John suffered severe, long-term brain injuries in the accident. Now 34, Dennis John cannot walk or talk. He communicates with his eyes and laughter, and seems to understand when his parents talk to him. Dennis and Rosalind have made a life of caring for their injured son.

Their personal tragedy, however, is not the end of the story. Mr. Benigno has turned tragedy into action. He has been a passionate advocate on behalf of his son raising awareness and promoting research efforts that offer the prospect of a cure for traumatic brain injury. The Benignos founded the Coalition for Brain Injury Research, which has donated more than \$125,000 in the past 2 years to the study of brain cell repair. They raise funds through walkathons and a lectures series, and Mr. Benigno has traveled throughout the country for research dollars.

Mr. Benigno has also turned to his elected representatives in New Jersey and Washington, DC. His efforts have led to the creation of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, cochaired by my good friend Congressman BILL PASCRELL. For the last 6 years, Mr. Benigno has also lobbied local, State,

and Federal legislators to support legislation that would create a dedicated source of funding for medical research into traumatic brain injuries.

His work has begun to pay off. On January 2 of this year, Governor McGreevy signed the Brain Injury Research Act into law. With this legislation, New Jersey becomes the first State in the Nation to create a funding stream for researchers devising treatments and cures for brain injuries. The act is expected to raise more than \$3 million a year for brain injury research from a \$1 surcharge on motor vehicle penalties.

Dennis John is one of more than 5.3 million Americans who currently suffer disabilities from brain injury, according to the Centers for Disease Control, CDC. Every year, 200,000 people sustain brain injuries, a number that exceeds the incidence of HIV/AIDS and breast cancer. Right now, there is no cure. In fact, brain injuries are the only catastrophic illness for which scientists have yet to readily identify a cure as their research goal. The Brain Injury Research Act, finally, offers hope to the hundreds of thousands who suffer from brain injuries that an effective therapy may be in sight.

While religious authorities, ethics scholars, and we here in the halls of government continue to debate the implications of stem and fetal cell research, the Benignos remain focused on one thing—supporting the research efforts that may find a cure for their son and others like him. As we make decisions that have the power to spark or extinguish the hopes of millions that the cures they pray for may be found, we should keep the Benignos in mind.

One point is very clear—this new law and the hope it nurtures are a credit to Mr. Benigno's dedication, courage, and perseverance. He is an inspiration to all of us, and a testament to what one determined citizen can achieve in our democracy.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE LOUISVILLE STUNNERS

• Mr. BUNNING. Madam President, I pay tribute and congratulate the Louisville Stunners 16-and-under fast pitch softball team. Their recent play has given Kentucky reason to be proud.

Led by coach Kevin Johnson, the Stunners qualified for their division's USSSA World Series in Columbus, IN, held from July 26 to August 1, 2004, being the only team to represent Kentucky. While there, they finished in fourth place out of 54 teams. Not only did they play well against the best teams in the country, but they also received the sportsmanship award.

I cannot think of a much better group of young people to represent Kentucky. As a former Major League