

medical care. FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has delivered essential sustenance and supplies. It has supplied and continues to supply generators and thousands of cots and blankets and has deployed over 1,800 personnel to save lives and render medical assistance.

Our action, coupled with the House action tomorrow, will ensure that all necessary funds are immediately available to respond to this ongoing crisis.

The Army, Navy, National Guard, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Air National Guard are hard at work conducting rescue operations and providing aid. Twenty thousand guardsmen are on the ground right now. Thousands more are on the way.

Volunteers from my home State of Tennessee have been on the front lines all week. I think of Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief, a ministry of 3,000 Southern Baptist Tennessee churches. They are working around the clock on rescue missions, at relief stations, cooking thousands of meals and providing emergency care. And they are offering something else, something desperately needed in this time of tragedy: the hope and the love and the compassion of a Nation—of all of us pulling together as one.

As Norma Jones, a 63-year-old volunteer from Indian Mound, told a newspaper, "Most of the time, the rescue survivors just want to be hugged."

Hundreds of storm victims have found refuge in Nashville and middle Tennessee. Many are staying with relatives until it is safe to return, which, as we all know, may not be for months.

The ongoing crisis has become a crisis of refugees, a crisis of refugees the likes of which this country has never seen. In Memphis, TN, actually a long way from the gulf, there are 10,000 refugees as we speak, and over the course of tonight they are expecting 4,000 more refugees in that town alone.

On the television, we see families wading waste-high for dozens of blocks in search of food or dry land or clean water. We see those families marooned on those rooftops, as floodwaters swirl past, writing, inscribing with whatever they have available: "Need insulin." "Diabetic." "Please help"—reaching out for hope, reaching out to be saved.

Our very own colleague and friend, Senator TRENT LOTT of Mississippi, lost his family home in this disaster. He returned recently—about 2 days ago—to his family home and found nothing. Our deepest sympathies go out to him and his family as they face this difficult time and to so many others in this body and, indeed, all around this country who face these personal challenges.

Towns, cities, communities, and shorelines have been decimated and reduced to rubble, to debris. We have a public health crisis that is just beginning, an ongoing crisis, but one that will increase almost with certainty over the coming days and weeks.

New Orleans, one of America's most vibrant cities, will take years to re-

cover. Hundreds of helpless people remain trapped on highway overpasses and in the city center with nowhere to go, no food, no water, no sanitation, and security has been tough, as we have all seen over the course of the day.

Most of Mississippi is without power, without electricity. Towns, villages have been totally destroyed.

The darkness of the night will be not just dramatic but, as we heard over the last several hours, haunting underneath those bridges, in rural areas with no lights for blocks, for miles, just human suffering.

Our rescue teams are working hard, and we see that. We are so proud of them, and they deserve our praise—our enormous praise—for their courage, for their boldness, for their dedication. People are still stranded. They are reaching their breaking point, and they need our help now. That is why at 10 o'clock tonight we are acting. That is why we are convening tonight in this urgent session for an emergency supplemental, operating by unanimous consent. FEMA needs additional funds now to continue their relief efforts and to continue the recovery.

Over the course of the last several days, we have had numerous calls with President Bush, and the Democratic leader and I just several hours ago received a call from President Bush requesting these funds. We applaud President Bush. He moved early to get emergency supplies prepared and ready to go. We have been in constant contact. He and his administration have been working tirelessly to meet this daunting challenge.

We all recognize we have much to do. There are a lot of frustrations that have bubbled up over the course of the last several days to do more or things are not going well, and we feel those frustrations. We feel that pain. We feel that suffering. Again, that is why we are here tonight—to support, to deliver, to answer those challenges.

I also thank our State and local leaders for their tremendous dedication and commitment. We, this body, our Federal Government, stand behind them 100 percent. Helping the victims of this hurricane disaster is our highest priority.

Hurricane Katrina and her aftermath is, as we now know, one of the worst catastrophes this country has ever seen. But this is America, and in America we face our toughest challenges together as one, united and lifted up by our compassion and our strength.

Even in our darkest hour, our humanity shines through, millions of citizens, millions of Americans committed to one another, to the care and well-being of all.

Inscribed in this very Chamber just above the Presiding Officer is "E Pluribus Unum," out of many, one.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I begin by offering my thoughts and my prayers to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. They have experienced untold horrors in the past few days, and the road to recovery will be long and hard. As we approach the start of our regular fall work period, there can be no more important challenge facing this body in the days ahead than providing relief to the victims of this catastrophe. It will be weeks before we know the full toll this storm has exacted. The only thing we know for sure is that we have experienced a national crisis, and the people of the Gulf Coast need and deserve our help.

In these crucial hours, thousands of Americans are engaged in search and rescue efforts. I hope these brave men and women performing these heroic duties know that they, too, are in our thoughts and our prayers.

Tonight, in the Senate, we are taking a critical first step toward bringing relief to the victims of this disaster. I support President Bush for submitting this \$10.5 billion request, and I thank my colleagues for permitting us to take up and pass this important legislation tonight.

Our unified response sends a powerful signal to victims of this tragedy, looking for signs that their Government sees their plight and stands with them during this dark time.

In these days ahead, it is important we continue to send a strong unified message. We must work together—not together as Democrats and Republicans but as Americans—united in helping families torn apart by this devastating storm.

It is my hope that our actions following the 9/11 attacks will be a model for what we do tonight and in the future. Our action after 9/11 was bipartisan. It was our top priority, and it moved significant resources to the victims of the terrorist attacks, and in a timely manner.

Our response to the tragedy of September 2005 must be every bit as bipartisan and direct as the tragedy of September 2001. We did not handle 9/11 with a Democratic or Republican aid package, and we should not handle this crisis any differently. This is not the time for partisanship. The victims of this terrible tragedy come first.

With that principle guiding us, it is important we begin to consider our next steps. The \$10.5 billion we are sending now represents a good first effort, but we all know much more needs to be done. I am deeply concerned about the security situation on the ground as I speak. Unless we establish security in this area, we cannot mount

an effective rescue operation, let alone begin rebuilding.

We have all seen the images of families stranded in the Superdome or sitting outside the Convention Center in filth and squalor. They do not have food. They do not have water. They do not have medicine. They are living in unsanitary conditions, and because we cannot keep the area safe, they have been unable to get out. They are trapped. This is not acceptable.

This is America. These are Americans we see suffering. We must find ways to get them the resources they need and bring them to safety. We must restore security, accelerate our rescue operations, and expedite our relief efforts as soon as possible. We must get these people the help they need and they deserve.

When we reconvene on Tuesday, just a few hours from today, the security and safety of the Gulf Coast residents must be our first order of business. These families are counting on us. They are suffering, and they have nowhere else to turn. We owe it to them to make their survival our top priority, and we should give them nothing less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRIST). The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, let me first of all thank the majority leader, who is now presiding over the Senate, for responding so quickly to the request of the President for a supplemental appropriations bill providing needed funds to the Federal Emergency Management Administration and to the Department of Defense to carry on the disaster relief efforts that they have begun in the States that were so seriously affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The President has submitted a letter describing the reasons for the request for this appropriations bill. Rather than reading the entire letter, which has been made available to everyone—the letter is actually addressed to the Speaker of the House—I will just read the first two paragraphs:

As I informed the Nation yesterday, we are dealing with one of the worst natural disasters in our country's history. Residents of the Gulf Coast states affected by the hurricane have lost loved ones, have lost homes, and have been displaced from their communities. My Administration is committed to ensuring that they will have the full support of the Federal Government.

Due to the catastrophic nature of Hurricane Katrina, I am asking the Congress to consider expeditiously the enclosed request totaling \$10.5 billion, for an emergency FY 2005 supplemental appropriation for the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense. These funds will ensure that Federal response and recovery efforts continue uninterrupted.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter from the President be printed in full in the RECORD.

Mr. REID. No objection.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SEPTEMBER 1, 2005.

The Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: As I informed the Nation yesterday, we are dealing with one of the worst natural disasters in our country's history. Residents of the Gulf Coast states affected by the hurricane have lost loved ones, have lost homes, and have been displaced from their communities. My Administration is committed to ensuring that they will have the full support of the Federal Government.

Due to the catastrophic nature of Hurricane Katrina, I am asking the Congress to consider expeditiously the enclosed request, totaling \$10.5 billion, for an emergency FY 2005 supplemental appropriation for the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense. These funds will ensure that Federal response and recovery efforts continue uninterrupted.

I hereby designate this proposal in the amount requested herein as an emergency requirement. This request responds to urgent needs associated with immediate response and recovery efforts associated with Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and other affected areas.

The enclosed request requires immediate action by the Congress to ensure that the Federal response to this disaster continues uninterrupted. I anticipate making a further request in the coming weeks that will provide for a comprehensive response and recovery effort after fully assessing the impact of the hurricane.

The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH,
The White House.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, the letter also contains a copy of a letter to the President from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Joshua B. Bolton. In this letter, he delineates specifically where the funds are needed, when they will be exhausted under current authority, and why this emergency appropriation is needed so that we can continue the aggressive disaster relief efforts in the coming weeks. And then he suggests:

I anticipate recommending to you an additional request in the coming weeks to provide for a comprehensive response to this hurricane, once reliable estimates can be developed that recognize the extent of this disaster.

This request fulfills known and urgent requirements that cannot reasonably be met under the current [fiscal year] 2005 funding levels. I recommend that you designate the proposal contained in this transmittal as an emergency requirement.

I ask unanimous consent that the complete text of the letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to the President be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. REID. No objection.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SEPTEMBER 1, 2005.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House.

Submitted for your consideration is a request for fiscal year 2005 supplemental appropriations totaling \$10.5 billion to fund immediate emergency response and recovery needs associated with Hurricane Katrina.

Immediate Federal response and recovery efforts to date have been extensive. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has deployed more than 50 Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, more than 25 Urban Search and Rescue task forces, eight swift water rescue teams, and two Incident Support Teams to the region. FEMA is also delivering water, meals, medical supplies, generators, tents, and tarps and is working to help relocate those displaced by the hurricane.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is moving significant military resources into the Gulf States to aid in rescue and recovery. Eight Navy ships have moved into the area with water, food, medicine, hospital facilities, berthing, and more. DOD has responded to all FEMA requests and is providing logistical help, including strategic lift support for search and rescue efforts. Other agencies are also participating in response and recovery efforts. For example, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Mike Leavitt has declared a public health emergency and HHS has delivered requested medical supplies to Louisiana, including basic first aid materials, blankets and patient clothing and comprehensive lifesaving medical equipment. HHS has placed 415 Public Health Service Officers on standby for deployment to support medical response in the affected states and CDC officials are working with local officials to identify hospital facilities, distribute medical supplies, and execute a public health plan to control disease and other risks to public health.

The funds that I recommend you request today will ensure that these immediate response and recovery efforts continue uninterrupted. The \$10 billion requested for the Department of Homeland Security will enable FEMA to continue ongoing response efforts, including assistance to families and individuals so that they can be sheltered, fed and provided with emergency medical care. These funds will also support emergency protective measures and debris removal in the affected areas, and urgent response activities performed by other Federal agencies, as delegated by FEMA under the Stafford Act.

The \$500 million requested for DOD will enable DOD to cover the costs associated with deployment of military personnel to assist communities, save lives, and provide relief supplies for the next several weeks. DOD's immediate crisis response costs include immediate facilities repairs of DOD property, evacuation of DOD personnel debris clean-up, transportation costs, and emergency utility costs.

I anticipate recommending to you an additional request in the coming weeks to provide for a comprehensive response to this hurricane, once reliable estimates can be developed that recognize the extent of this disaster.

This request fulfills known and urgent requirements that cannot reasonably be met under the current FY 2005 funding levels. I recommend that you designate the proposal contained in this transmittal as an emergency requirement.

I have carefully reviewed this proposal and am satisfied that it is necessary at this time. Therefore, I join the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Defense in recommending you transmit the proposal to the Congress.

Sincerely,

JOSHUA B. BOLTON,
Director.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, in response to this request, the House of Representatives, I am advised, will be prepared to adopt a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations to

meet immediate needs arising from the consequences of Hurricane Katrina for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005. And the text of the bill is that it:

Be enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the following sums are appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, namely the Department of Homeland Security:

For an additional amount for "Disaster Relief", \$10,000,000,000, to remain available until expended . . .

And then a provision, provided \$500 million to the Department of Defense:

. . . for emergency hurricane expenses, to support costs of evacuation, emergency repairs, deployment of personnel, and other costs resulting from immediate relief efforts, to remain available until September 30, 2006.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of that bill, which we are advised will be adopted by the House of Representatives, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, namely:

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND
RESPONSE
DISASTER RELIEF

For an additional amount for "Disaster Relief", \$10,000,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That the amount provided herein is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE
OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, DEFENSE-WIDE
(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For an additional amount for "Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide", \$500,000,000 for emergency hurricane expenses, to support costs of evacuation, emergency repairs, deployment of personnel, and other costs resulting from immediate relief efforts, to remain available until September 30, 2006: *Provided*, That the Secretary of Defense may transfer these funds to appropriations for military personnel, operation and maintenance, procurement, family housing, Defense Health Program, and working capital funds: *Provided further*, That funds transferred shall be merged with and be available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the appropriation or fund to which transferred: *Provided further*, That this transfer authority is in addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense: *Provided further*, That upon a determination that all or part of the funds transferred from this appropriation are not necessary for the purposes provided herein, such amounts may be transferred back to this appropriation: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Defense shall, not more than 5 days after making transfers from this appropriation, notify the congressional defense committees in writing of any such transfer: *Provided further*, That the amount provided herein is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

This Act may be cited as the "Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From the Consequences of Hurricane Katrina, 2005".

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I commend the majority leader, with the concurrence and support of the minority leader, for calling the Senate into session tonight under these emergency conditions, to approve as if passed by the House, and when passed by the House and it is received here in the Senate, an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to fund disaster relief efforts.

These efforts are ongoing. We have all had an opportunity to see on television sets and to hear and read newspaper accounts of the work that has been going on the last several days. I had the opportunity to travel to my State of Mississippi yesterday and spent the day touring the ravaged areas along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and then traveled to Jackson, the Capitol of the State, where I was able to meet with Governor Haley Barbour and his disaster assistance team that he had assembled and was supervising in their efforts to make all of the resources of our State government available to disaster victims and to help them in the effort to recover from this terrible hurricane.

I have never seen any storm inflict such great damage as I saw yesterday. I was on the Gulf Coast immediately following Hurricane Camille in 1969. I was a practicing lawyer at the time. We were trying to help one of our clients ensure that the employees of their company, Standard Oil Company refinery, were able to present their claims to their insurance companies and otherwise be compensated, as they were entitled to under their policies, for the damages sustained throughout the area where those employees were living along the Gulf Coast. That was the worst storm that anybody in my age group had ever heard of, before or since—until Hurricane Katrina.

I can tell you, looking along the coastline, flying in a Mississippi National Guard helicopter, the whole coastline, the whole coastal area of the State has been virtually destroyed. There are a few buildings that are left standing—a few. Those may not be habitable, and the businesses that they house may not be able to continue to function until extensive repairs are made on those buildings, so it is virtually all a total loss for blocks and blocks beyond the beach area.

Everything was quiet. There was nobody moving around; it wasn't until today that many people could have access to the areas where those houses once stood. It was quiet. It was eerie. It was a horrible sight to behold. I don't know of anything that has depressed me more than seeing what I saw yesterday in my State of Mississippi.

So I am confident the Senate will continue to follow the progress of the disaster assistance effort to be sure that we make available to all Federal

agencies and departments the funds they need to do the job to help in the recovery efforts in Mississippi and in Alabama and Louisiana and in the other States. There have been damages in Florida and Georgia and Texas as well.

The primary use of the funds that we give to the Department of Homeland Security, as requested by the President, will be used to reimburse Federal agencies for providing the relief effort that we have come to appreciate. The Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, Health and Human Services Department, Housing and Urban Development—all are able to share in these funds that will be disbursed to reimburse those departments for participating in the disaster relief effort. So it is not only this one agency but others that will be sustained and assisted as they continue to work in this effort.

The President has appointed this task force as we all know now: Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff is chairing the task force on Hurricane Katrina; Mike Brown, the Director of FEMA, has been on the ground since the very beginning of this effort, coordinating the activities on the ground. Fifty-two counties in Mississippi have been identified as eligible for disaster declarations; thirty-two parishes in Louisiana; six counties in Alabama. The three Governors of those States have requested that the President waive cost-share requirements because of the expensive nature of these expenses for emergency response activities, and the President has granted this waiver.

I ask unanimous consent that a description of the challenges and accomplishments of this disaster relief effort be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LIFE-SAVING EFFORTS

Over 3,000 people have been rescued by the United States Coast Guard and other operations. The Coast Guard has deployed 57 aircraft and 27 cutters.

More than 25 urban search and rescue task forces are operating with 1,800 personnel.

More than 50 National Disaster Medical System teams have deployed to deal with medical needs.

1,700 trucks have been mobilized to supply water, ice, food, medicine, and medical supplies.

450 buses are moving people out of the affected areas in Louisiana.

Over 78,000 people are in shelters across the region.

13.4 million liters of water and 3.4 million pounds of ice have been shipped to the impacted areas.

ELECTRICITY/ENERGY

2.3 million citizens are without power in the Gulf Coast States.

Gasoline and diesel fuel is being routed to emergency personnel and services first.

The Department of Energy has authorized the release of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The Environmental Protection Agency has temporarily waived standards for gasoline and diesel fuels to make sure that more fuel is available for emergency services.

MILITARY

State and local law enforcement and the National Guard are working to restore order throughout the affected areas.

13,000 National Guard are stationed in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida, under control of the Governors. Approximately 6,000 members of the National Guard are stationed in Mississippi.

The total number of National Guard is expected to increase to more than 20,000 by Friday.

The Department of Defense has sent eight Navy ships to the area, including a hospital ship with 100 beds and 800 medical personnel.

The Department of Defense has provided over 20 million ready-to-eat meals.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Army Corps of Engineers is coordinating efforts to repair levees in New Orleans and remove water from the city.

Federal and State departments of transportation are working to repair and reopen highways and interstates.

Interstates 55, 59, 49, and 20 have been reopened in Mississippi. Interstate 10 is open with one lane of traffic for emergency vehicles only.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Health and Human Services has declared a public health emergency in the affected areas.

A network of 40 medical shelters with 10,000 beds is staffed by 4,000 medical personnel.

2,600 beds have been identified in the immediate area, with 40,000 more beds nationwide.

AGRICULTURE

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is providing shelters and mass feedings sites and issuing emergency food stamps and infant formula. Over 80,000 pounds of commodities arrived in New Orleans today.

OTHER

The Internal Revenue Service announced special relief for taxpayers in the disaster areas.

The Small Business Administration will position loan officers in disaster recovery centers to help small business owners.

The American Red Cross is providing a safe haven for nearly 46,000 evacuees in more than 230 shelters across the region.

MAKING EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, at this point, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the recess or adjournment of the Senate, the Senate may receive from the House an emergency supplemental appropriations bill for relief of the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the text of which is at the desk, and that the measure be considered read three times and passed and a motion to reconsider laid on the table; provided that the text of the House bill is identical to that which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. I want the record to be spread with the fact that the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Senator ROBERT BYRD, has indicated he fully supports the action tonight and stands arm-in-arm with the chairman of the committee, Senator COCHRAN, to move forward any other

requests that would come down from the administration.

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

The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, my particular thoughts go to our colleague from Mississippi, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, who has experienced visiting such devastation.

I have some idea of how he feels because less than 4 years ago—a little more than 4 years ago—I experienced the same in New York.

Tonight, our Nation is experiencing one of the most tragic and heart-rending natural disasters in our history. Entire towns have been destroyed, lives upturned, families lost, and the chaos we have all watched unfold continues even tonight.

Our hearts go out to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and all of the other Gulf States affected by Hurricane Katrina. Our prayers go out most of all to those still stranded and to those who have lost loved ones. The images on television are devastating—hungry, weeping children sitting on the street amidst garbage; family members returning to the destroyed remains of their neighborhoods discovering they have lost everything they have ever owned, from precious family keepsakes to their houses, cars, and livelihoods; and angry, frightened people with nowhere to go and no rescue in sight.

I join with all Americans and people all over the world in praying for the safe rescue of all the victims of this heartbreaking tragedy.

Four years ago, my city of New York faced a devastating attack, and America stood with us in our time of need. New Yorkers will stand with the people of the gulf region now as they stood with us then.

The love and support New Yorkers received from the rest of the country after 9/11 meant so much in the wake of those attacks and the long, difficult road to recovery. I want the people of New Orleans, Louisiana, Mississippi, and the rest of the gulf to know we will support them, too, no matter how long and difficult their recovery may be. We will do whatever it takes to help now, tomorrow, and into the future.

Our first step comes tonight, when the Senate will agree to provide \$10.5 billion in desperately needed disaster relief funding to the devastated region. And we will stand unified with President Bush and ready to provide everything and anything that New Orleans and the rest of the gulf region will need to rebuild and recover. Just as we did after 9/11, this body and the entire Nation will work together to overcome this disaster. The American people are strong, and we will persevere.

Like so many Americans, I have been watching the terrible images on television, and I worry about the thousands of people still stranded in the Superdome and throughout the city and region without food, water, sanitary fa-

ilities, or medical treatment. I worry so very much about the desperately ill people, including small babies and frail seniors who need medical care, and the people who may still be trapped in places rescuers have not reached, people in attics who retreated to the attics as the waters rose and then were stuck there.

I know firsthand how difficult it can be to organize a massive rescue and recovery effort, and clearly this disaster is unprecedented in its scope and difficulty.

Tonight, a lot of people's lives still hang in the balance. Money for the long run is necessary, and that is why we are here tonight. But there is much more we must do immediately. We must focus all our efforts on rescuing those who are in need of medicine, who are hungry, thirsty, and frightened and despairing. We must get these people to shelter and to medical facilities immediately. We must fly in food, water, clothing, blankets, medicine, and whatever else is needed. We must get as many ships, buses, and trucks as we can, from wherever we can get them, to transport the victims and to begin clearing the wreckage. We must provide the soldiers and law enforcement needed to restore law and order—however many it takes.

This is literally a life-and-death crisis, where every moment of delay has a human price. There is not a minute to lose, no matter the cost.

I know the phones have been ringing off the hook in my office and those of my colleagues. Many have called asking where they can contribute. That act of generosity is also noted. We are hearing from our constituents who have heartfelt questions about what went wrong in this tragedy and what else could have been done to prevent it. At the moment, we must keep our total focus on saving lives. But I want them to know that their questions are not falling on deaf ears. In due time, after we have done everything to save those whose lives hang in the balance, we will ask those difficult questions—not to lay blame but to learn from the mistakes that were made so that the Nation will be better prepared for the next disaster we might face.

But now is the time for action, for solving these problems, and for saving the lives that hang in the balance. In the days and months ahead, this Nation will pull together united as we did after 9/11. We will do everything we can to help the victims and repair and rebuild the cities and towns in the gulf, especially the much beloved city of New Orleans.

Just as we did in New York, we will face difficulties and great sorrow, but I know I join all of my colleagues in the Senate in pledging assistance—financial and beyond—that the gulf region needs and anything else in our power to help our fellow citizens.

Tonight, our prayers—our fervent prayers—are with them.

● Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today with sadness in my heart, yet