

regard to Judge Roberts' hearings and the nomination process over the next month. Those hearings will begin Monday, September 12, at noon. The committee will report out Judge Roberts no later than Thursday, September 22. We will begin Senate floor consideration the week of September 26, and we will complete action no later than Friday, September 30.

I believe that is relatively complete in terms of the changes we have made in response to two very sad and unfortunate events: Hurricane Katrina, a natural disaster which is ongoing, as we all know, and the death of Chief Justice Rehnquist. We will remain flexible in terms of our scheduling in this body to address that natural catastrophe along the Gulf States. We will be acting in a bipartisan and bicameral way, as has been seen to date, in these matters in order to facilitate an immediate response initially to the victims and then ultimately to the recovery and rebuilding of those gulf regions, with the goal of greater prosperity than they have ever seen in the past.

#### KATRINA AFTERMATH AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Mr. FRIST. I did have the opportunity to travel to the gulf coast and participate, not as a Senator but as a volunteer physician, and to see firsthand the tremendous response on the ground among our medical personnel, our health personnel, and our volunteers, but also to witness firsthand that scope of human suffering and need that was caused by last week's catastrophe, which affected those three Gulf States and indirectly affected the entire region—indeed, the entire country. What I saw was staggering. Hurricane Katrina now stands as the largest natural disaster in American history. Ninety thousand square miles, an area larger than the United Kingdom, have been utterly devastated.

Many of my colleagues have had the chance to fly over that region. As we all know, many of our colleagues and their families have been directly and personally impacted. The cities are flooded, the entire coast along southern Mississippi destroyed, towns demolished, farmlands turned to swamp, transportation, distribution channels totally wiped out, and local communication destroyed, slowly coming back but totally destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of residents affected across these three States are now displaced.

In our leadership meeting a little while ago, we went around the table. Everybody has received the displaced persons in numbers of thousands and thousands.

Many of these people have health problems, short-term and long-term problems, that must be addressed. It is going to take all of us pulling together to do this.

Secretary Leavitt, Health and Human Services Secretary, estimates

that thousands of innocent people have died in the hurricane's wake. As the floodwaters recede, more and more bodies, unfortunately, will be found—people who were unable to escape the torrential flooding that took place shortly after the hurricane struck. The loss is so profound that none of us will be able to express what we have seen or what we feel in words.

I have had a chance to be in other areas, in Sri Lanka after the tsunami and in the Darfur region in Sudan. Everybody says, Is this worse? How do you compare it? You can't compare it; all were tremendous tragedies. But I will say that what I had the chance to see there, in terms of the mass of humanity in that convention center and in the New Orleans airport, I can't compare it to anything I have seen, even having seen such tragedies elsewhere in the world.

One of the other things I need to mention early on is that human connection you do see when you are in the middle of a response such as this—the compassion, the concern. You saw patients lying together on scores and scores of stretchers, hundreds of stretchers that were on the floor, and you have one patient leaning over, taking care of another patient even though they didn't know each other. Patients were taking care of themselves, especially early on when there was a clear shortage of personnel to respond to that initial disaster, as people came flowing into the airport.

You had rescue workers from all walks of life, volunteers from college campuses, health personnel from what are called DMAT or disaster medical assistance teams from around the country, all enduring crushing heat and exhaustion to pour out their hearts and use those skills they had, whatever those skills, so we could maximize that response to those people being evacuated from this place.

Volunteer workers were from the State of the distinguished President pro tempore, the State of Alaska. I had the opportunity to work side by side with them, and with volunteers from Hawaii and from Tennessee. I saw a number of my colleagues from medical college, from Vanderbilt in Nashville, and Boston, MA, where I worked in the past. They were contributing in such a positive way.

Many people were so moved by the stories they read they got on the road and went to that Gulf State region to volunteer their services. They didn't ask; they didn't pay attention to the redtape or people who said stay away, and went in. They were all very useful as they poured out their hearts to those who were suffering from this catastrophe.

I have to also mention the Knox County Volunteers, because the sheriff's department there sent down several helicopters early on, again before even being asked, and they were very instrumental in dropping food and dropping supplies and helping people

trying to evacuate their homes. I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with them for both days, both at the convention center where we spent time, as well as at the New Orleans airport and, indeed, over in Mobile, AL. They were there and all along the Mississippi coast, as we touched down there.

I will have more to say about what I have been able to observe in those experiences because I think it does reflect both the misery but also the great compassion and the pulling together, the great spirit of the American people that we are going to absolutely have to call upon as we continue to address this tragedy.

We in the Senate are acting. We are acting aggressively and responsively and early. We are going to continue to do so. This has become our major priority, even though there are a lot of other issues we are addressing. We have the skyrocketing energy prices, gasoline prices, and oil prices. We have the ongoing war in Iraq. We have the judicial nomination which is underway. And we have the response to Katrina. The response to Katrina right now, because it is an ongoing catastrophe, an ongoing natural disaster, needs to be first and foremost. We are acting and we are going to continue to act aggressively.

Last Thursday night we came in and the Democratic leader and I helped usher through, in a highly unusual emergency session, the \$10.5 billion aid bill. As we said then, that was only the beginning. We have so many urgent responsibilities now that we will be working together in a bipartisan way to address these issues.

Last Tuesday we sent out a note to all committee chairmen to begin bringing their legislative proposals to us. Over the next 48 hours we will be talking to each of the chairmen and ranking members, to pull together their ideas both for the immediate response and the midterm response and the long-term response. There are a lot of human, practical needs that have to be addressed right now. The Federal Government has a major role as we look at health and we look at social services and we look at housing and we look at food and we look at shelter, and then, in the longer term, solutions to putting the Gulf Coast back on a fast track to recovery and to rebuild, and rebuild with a goal of even greater prosperity in the future.

The Energy Committee is conducting hearings today and will be addressing the supply/demand issues. There will be many more hearings addressing these issues. I have encouraged our Members to look at some of these real warning flags that have arisen, things such as the price gouging and excessive profit taking by energy companies and by oil companies. These are issues we have to be aggressive with, especially in this time of need.

Even before the hurricane hit, having spent about 2 weeks traveling across

Tennessee, listening, we heard again and again the price of gasoline and diesel at the pump was wiping out any margins of even survival for many farmers and people who rely on our transportation industry.

I do want to call upon the energy industry and the energy sector to be a responsible corporate actor. If not, there is going to be a real focus placed by this Congress because they absolutely must respond appropriately. I mention that because of the reports, people calling in about price gouging and excessive profit taking. If that is occurring anywhere, it absolutely must be reported immediately to the Department of Energy and must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

We have asked the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to conduct vigorous oversight hearings on what went wrong during those initial days and hours, and what lessons we can learn from this awful tragedy. Most of our response and energy needs to be focused on the victims right now, both their evacuation and responding to their needs, but at the same time that committee will begin their vigorous oversight hearings in an orderly way to collect the appropriate information. Emergency response was unacceptable early on and in many ways I saw it firsthand as a medical volunteer. We have to fix it. Those sorts of things should not happen in America today.

Every issue before us we will be addressing. Again, we are just coming back in. I look forward to doing that. One of the biggest problems on the ground will be the issues surrounding communications, command and control structures, and we will be addressing the longer term issues of housing long term but also temporary housing, and issues such as health coverage and unemployment insurance, getting power back, restoring the ports back to activity, dredging channels for those displaced, and making sure their insurance coverage—if they were so lucky to have insurance—is actually provided to them in a timely way.

Let me close by simply saying I am humbled and inspired by the tremendous generosity of all Americans who have given so much of themselves and their time and their energy over the last several days—and their money—and the resources of compassion. I thank you and I know America thanks you.

We are going to have to continue to invest. We are going to have to continue to pull together. The Senate is rolling up its sleeves. It has done so. We are at work and will work aggressively to respond appropriately.

I am confident that America will be able to meet the challenges that lay ahead. Through all of this, we will be made stronger and better and more unified and more hopeful as we pull together as a government and as a people in this time of crisis. The American people are leading the way, and to-

gether we will all be able to overcome these challenges.

#### THE SUPREME COURT

Tomorrow, I will have more to say about Chief Justice Rehnquist and the nomination of Judge Roberts for Chief Justice.

Today, let me briefly say the Senate and the Nation mourn the loss of the Chief, as he was affectionately known by so many of us and known on the Supreme Court. We will all miss Chief Justice Rehnquist—from his brilliant legal mind to his efficient and effective administration of the Supreme Court.

We look forward with confidence as the President's new nominee for Chief Justice, Judge Roberts, is considered. Judge Roberts learned from the best. He was, in fact, a clerk, as we all know, for then-Associate Justice Rehnquist. There is no doubt in my mind that Judge Roberts has the temperament, has the skill, and has the mind to lead the Supreme Court for decades to come.

With that, we have a lot to do. I know the Democratic leader has a statement. Then we will have time this afternoon after our lunches for people to come back and make statements as well.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding the Senate, under the standing order, is to go out of session at 12:30 today. Is that right?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, if my remarks take a little bit longer, that we wait until after my remarks to put the recess.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the August recess was memorable for me for several reasons, not the least of which was my first visit to a hospital on my own behalf since I was 8 years old. I am grateful to the physicians who cared and consulted with me. Admiral Eisold, the Physician of the Capitol, is really a national treasure. The Congress is fortunate to have his curative hand over all we do.

While speaking of admirals, I would be remiss not to mention the Senate Chaplain, ADM Barry Black. After my brief hospital visit, my first public appearance in Nevada was at a faith-based summit I had been planning since January. The event turned out extremely well. The highlight of the summit was a presentation of Dr. Black, our Chaplain. I only wish all Americans—Christian, Jewish, Protestant, Mormon, Hindu, and Muslim—could have heard his presentation on faith and on virtue and why America must be a virtuous nation. His remarks were inspiring not only for me but for everyone within the sound of his voice.

I am happy to report that I am well. I feel fine. I have been advised medically that I have no restrictions on my

activities. I am so fortunate to now return to work in a place that I love—the U.S. Senate.

Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for the thoughts and prayers and good wishes that I received from my Senate colleagues and the rest of the Senate family—some of whom are in the Chamber as I speak—and, of course, my friends in Nevada and around the country. I will long remember the cards, letters, phone calls, e-mails, and other expressions of concern. So even though these words are insufficient, I thank you all for your concern for me.

#### SUPREME COURT NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, much has happened in the weeks since we adjourned for the August recess. In just the last few days, we have seen tragedy strike the gulf coast and learned that our friend, William Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the United States, had passed. Our thoughts and our prayers are with those struggling to pick up the pieces on the gulf coast following the hurricane. And, of course, our thoughts and prayers are with the Chief Justice's family.

I had the good fortune of working with the Chief on several occasions, the first when I was head of the Democratic Policy Committee. I told my Democratic Senators I was going to ask the Chief Justice to come and talk to us. They said he would never do that. I called him, and he was happy to come. At that lunch, he displayed a great command of the law, of course, a strong commitment to judicial independence, and something that we didn't know existed—a sharp sense of humor. Just a short time later, I got to know him better when he presided over the impeachment trial here in the Senate.

I am grateful to have worked with him, and in addition to have spoken to him on the telephone on several occasions at his office and at his home.

As I have indicated, my condolences are with his family. He will be missed.

Now that the President has said he will nominate Judge Roberts to replace Chief Justice Rehnquist, the Senate's advice and consent responsibility is even more important. If confirmed to this lifetime job, Judge Roberts will be the leader of the third branch of the Federal Government and most prominent judge in our Nation. The Senate must be vigilant in considering this nomination.

I, of course, look forward to consulting with the President on the O'Connor seat which at some time will become vacant when the replacement is chosen. Justice O'Connor, we have heard from this floor and around the country, has been a voice of moderation and reason on the Court, and should be replaced by someone who, like her, embodies fundamental American values of fairness, liberty, and equality.