

MAKING FURTHER EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will consider H.R. 3673, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3673) making further emergency supplemental appropriations to meet immediate needs arising from the consequences of Hurricane Katrina, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I yield myself time as necessary for my statement.

Mr. President, we do turn to the second supplemental—the second supplemental in a week and a half—to address the natural disaster we have watched unfold, and that has literally unfolded in several ways, which is continuing now with both continued recovery and people settling around this country.

Yesterday, Speaker HASTERT and I announced the formation of a bicameral and bipartisan committee to analyze and conduct a real top-to-bottom investigation of the emergency preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina. The committee will be made up of senior Members. They will report their findings no later than February 15.

The review will look at the emergency plans that were in place at the local, State, and Federal levels, and they will assess how the local, State, and Federal governments actually responded.

It is clear that in some places the response was simply unacceptable at all levels of breakdown in systems. I saw it this weekend firsthand as a medical volunteer: too little command-and-control structure, too little communication. America deserves better. America deserves answers. The Senate must do all it can—and we are doing all we can right now—to provide immediate relief for the hundreds of thousands of people stranded and shattered by last week's events.

We urgently need to pass a second disaster relief supplemental, and we will do that tonight, with no amendments, no delay. It is absolutely critical.

Last Thursday's \$10.5 billion emergency package has been drained—totally drained. As of midnight tonight, all of the money will have been spent. And it is good. It shows a positive, rapid, quick response on behalf of our Federal Government. But it means we must act; thus this supplemental bill we will be voting on here in about 90 minutes.

If we were to fail to act, every relief that is going on right this very moment, every search-and-rescue operation, all of the emergency food that is being delivered, and the shelter that is being provided, and the medical care that is being extended, will be without money when the sun rises tomorrow.

The administration has requested \$51.8 billion in this supplemental. That breaks down to \$50 billion for FEMA, \$1.4 billion for the Defense Department, and \$400 million for the Army Corps of Engineers.

We need to pass this bill and get it to the President for his signature tonight. Tens of thousands of volunteers, relief workers, law enforcement and military personnel are working right now, this very minute, to provide aid, rescue, and recovery.

National guardsmen are going block by submerged block to carry out their rescues.

The Army Corps of Engineers is hard at work pumping the floodwaters out of New Orleans. The water level, happily, has already gone down by 40 percent. They estimate it will take another 2½ months to completely drain the city.

Right now, 60,000 U.S. military forces are on the ground in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, aiding the recovery. They are providing extensive search and rescue, evacuation, and medical support.

Twenty-seven Navy and Coast Guard ships are stationed off the gulf coast providing supplies and medical treatment.

FEMA is working around the clock to find temporary homes for the thousands of displaced families. They are exhausting every option, including military bases, cruise ships, emergency trailers, vacant properties, and motels.

All of these efforts are underway, and they must continue. The lives of hundreds of thousands of people are at stake.

Meanwhile, there is still a lot of work to do, and we are working around the clock to do it here in the Senate.

Today, we began consideration of the Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill, which includes critical support for recovery and rebuilding efforts. It provides funding for the disaster loan program administered by the Small Business Administration. It provides grants to State and local authorities, including law enforcement, for critical equipment such as satellite phones, which are especially critical right now where communication is spotty and, in places, where sometimes communication is even nonexistent.

The Commerce bill also supports the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA. NOAA is responsible, as we all know, for researching, forecasting, monitoring, and warning the public of hurricanes such as Hurricane Katrina.

Clearly, we need to pass this bill. We also need to cut the redtape and bureaucracy that gets in the way of helping people, the redtape and bureaucracy we have heard again and again slowing the response at every level.

In the coming days and weeks we will take up legislation that streamlines the system and gets help to the people who need it on time, efficiently and quickly.

As we have seen over the past 12 days, America is a compassionate, generous Nation. People from all over have poured out their hearts, time, and resources to help their neighbors on the gulf coast. Private citizens and businesses have donated hundreds of millions of dollars. Relief organizations and faith-based organizations are on the front lines every day working valiantly to provide material and spiritual assistance.

Here in the Senate, we cleared a resolution last night allowing noncash Katrina assistance to be solicited and donated among our Senate employees.

Americans from all across this country and in all walks of life are offering hope and love and compassion. It is a testament to our Nation's strength and to our historic bond as citizens, as Americans.

Hurricane Katrina now stands as the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history. It is a tragedy of epic proportions. But there is hope and there is determination.

The gulf coast will recover and rebuild and emerge more modern and more prosperous than ever. It is going to be a massive effort. It will take all of our strength and all of our determination. But this is America, and in America no challenge is too great. We rebuilt Chicago. We rebuilt San Francisco. New Orleans, Biloxi, Mobile, and the entire coast will rise again bigger, stronger, and better than ever.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, Senators are aware that the bill that has come over from the House carries additional appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for disaster relief in the amount of \$50 billion; and for the Department of Defense, \$1.4 billion; and for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, \$400 million.

The House has adopted this measure, and now we are hopeful the Senate will act tonight so these funds will be made available immediately to the agencies that are carrying out the disaster relief efforts in the States affected by Hurricane Katrina.

This is a destructive force of monumental proportions, the most widespread destruction in my State from any natural disaster in history. So the relief being provided now by the Federal Government agencies is very meaningful and deeply appreciated. So are the voluntary contributions that are being made by Americans who are freely, and in a heartfelt way, giving what they can to help those who are less fortunate.

Senators are volunteering personal assistance. The Senator from Illinois, BARACK OBAMA, is organizing a team of doctors to come to Mississippi to provide emergency medical care for those who are still in need of that care. Medicines are being brought with those physicians to be administered to those who

need them. That is one example. There are many others.

Members of Congress are raising money on their own volition and then turning it over to the fund that has been started by Governor Haley Barbour in our State, to collect donations from people who want to help victims, to be used in humanitarian ways, to help people who are in a desperate situation, with no housing, no clothing, no food, many of whom are very poor.

So it is heartwarming to witness this. I express personally my appreciation for all of those who have acted so generously on behalf of the victims of this hurricane.

We have other Senators who have asked for time to speak on this measure tonight. I know the distinguished Senator from West Virginia has time reserved under the order and the understanding for proceeding on this bill. I am happy to yield the floor to him for any comments he would like to make at this time, if he chooses to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, Hurricane Katrina dealt this country an unspeakable blow. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed. Families have lost everything. Entire cities have been washed away. And, most tragically, hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives have been lost. Our Gulf States are in crisis. People have been scattered to cities and homes across the country, as the Army Corps of Engineers continues to pump the water out of the flood zones. It will take weeks, if not months, for the waters to recede.

The Congress has responded. Last week, the Congress approved \$10.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding. And now we are poised to provide another \$51.8 billion. This funding is likely just a down payment.

The bill that is before the Senate provides \$50 billion for FEMA Disaster Relief. This funding will provide food, water, housing and cash assistance to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. It also will be used to reimburse the many Federal agencies that are in the region providing health care, rebuilding roads, providing security and removing debris. The bill also includes \$1.4 billion for the Department of Defense for the deployment of military personnel to provide relief supplies, health care, and security, and for repairing facilities. Finally, the bill includes \$400 million for the Corps of Engineers for emergency repairs to levees and pump stations, and for draining flooded areas. The White House expects that there will be a need for more funding in early October.

Congress responded to the President's first supplemental request in one day because FEMA was about to run out of disaster relief funds. Congress approved the President's \$10.5 billion request without amendment. Yesterday afternoon, we received the President's second supplemental re-

quest, for \$51.8 billion, once again because FEMA is expected to need more money. Today, because of the urgency, we are approving his second request. I understand that the President intends to send a third request, which will be more comprehensive. Yet, the administration has not made any commitment to send that request to the Congress quickly. The White House should not, once again, send that request one day before FEMA runs out of money and expect the Congress to rubber stamp the request. I hope the majority leader will work with the White House to make sure that the request is sent quickly so that Congress can debate the matter. As Senator REID, Senator LANDRIEU, and others have pointed out, there are many issues about the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina that should be examined.

As we move forward, we must ask serious questions about the Government's failure to help the people of the Gulf States on a timely basis. We want answers—we all want answers—as to why it took so long for rescue teams to get on the ground. There is no excuse for the days of delay and the inexplicable lack of coordination in the response effort. The anger and frustration in our country are justified.

Was the slow response because our resources were committed overseas? Were lives lost because the Government took its eyes away from the danger? Or because it failed to recognize a danger at all? That's one of the issues that most concerns me. We all watched the weather radar and saw this storm. Its footprint covered the entire Gulf of Mexico. We knew the storm was coming. We knew the danger was coming. Yet, the Government failed to respond. Lives were lost because the Government failed to do its job.

What would have happened if this had been a terrorist attack that we did not see coming? What if a surprise attack breached the levees around Lake Pontchartrain? How slow would our response have been then, to a danger that the Government did not see coming?

The Government clearly was not ready to evacuate large numbers of low-income, disabled and elderly people. Not all people in this country have jets, helicopters and fleets of SUVs to move them around. If there were a terrorist attack, would our Government, once again, leave behind the many people in this Nation who do not have the resources to be mobile?

It's time that we put America first. It's time that we refocus our energies and our resources into protecting this Nation here at home. Reinforce our critical infrastructure. Train and coordinate response and rescue efforts. Close the gaps. Fix the problems.

The Government's actions in the days following the tragedy were slow and misguided at best, and inept at worst. The Federal response effort was unacceptable, and the Government must do better. Let us pray that this funding will help to save lives and ease the suffering.

I urge Senators to support this supplemental appropriations bill. Hurricane Katrina is a national disaster. It is a national tragedy. And it will take a national effort to help our fellow citizens rebuild their homes, their cities, and their lives.

I thank my distinguished colleague, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. COCHRAN, for his contribution. May I say to him, I have personally been concerned about him, his people in Mississippi, his people and Senator LOTT's people. I called him and told him that I wanted to be of assistance, if I could be, and that any appropriations bill that we might appropriate, might send from our committee would have my support. We did this promptly. We are going to continue to do what we can. I commiserate with him as to the tragedy which has befallen his State, his people, our country, our people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am deeply grateful to the distinguished Senator from West Virginia for his kind remarks and his cooperation and presentation of this bill and support of the first supplemental appropriations bill, as well as providing funding to try to help the disaster victims in my State and the other coastal States that were affected by this terrible tragedy.

I have admired my friend from West Virginia from the moment I came to the Senate. I respect his dedication to the Senate and his conscientious efforts to effectively represent the State of West Virginia in the U.S. Senate. I have learned a lot from him, and I continue to do so as time goes on.

One of the things that has not been as widely noted, I think, as should have been is the leadership provided in the gulf coast areas by the local elected leaders. The Governor of my State, Haley Barbour, has shown an enormous amount of skill, compassion, and determination to use all of the available resources of our State Government to aid the disaster victims, to get them to safety, to provide for them, to help in the debris removal, getting businesses started again and the schools going. It has been a challenge of enormous proportions.

I was able to visit with him and his team that he had assembled at the Mississippi Emergency Management Offices on Riverside Drive in Jackson, MS, on my first visit to the State after the hurricane, and I was very impressed by the dedication, the willingness to work, the voluntarism that was apparent on that occasion and to see the results that are being produced by the local leaders in my State to ensure the recovery from this disaster. So they are to be commended. We are going to continue to support them from the Federal level to the fullest extent of our capability and understanding of the needs and how we can best do it.

There are safeguards in this bill, Senators should know, to help protect against abuse. There are provisions in the bill requiring the Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency to make weekly reports on the obligations of their funds. These can be monitored to ensure that they are consistent with the law and the needs of the people who have been affected by this disaster.

The Department of Defense is required to report within 5 days of any transfers of funds in this relief effort.

In the Federal Emergency Management Agency title, there is \$50 billion; \$15 million is for the inspector general to conduct audits, as authorized by law, to ensure that the funds are being disbursed as authorized by law and in accordance with the understanding of the needs of the people who are affected by this disaster.

We do not want waste. We do not want abuse of these programs. We want them to be administered with integrity and an adherence to the principles of law.

I want Senators to understand we are not taking this money and pouring it out on the ground. We are trying to devise ways to see that it gets to the people who need it, who are entitled to it under the provisions of the disaster legislation that we passed in earlier disasters.

Mr. President, I know other Senators have asked for recognition. I see my colleague on the floor, Senator LOTT, who personally has suffered tremendous damage and loss of his home on the gulf coast, who has worked tirelessly—I have observed it—on the phones, traveling back and forth from the State, interacting with Members of the House to help shape this legislation so it provides meaningful relief not only for the victims in our State but throughout the gulf coast region.

I commend him and salute him and want him to know we are standing with him and trying to provide all the support and assistance we know how to provide to help overcome the ravages of this hurricane.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I inquire of my distinguished colleague, the senior Senator from Mississippi, has he made other commitments at this time or would it be appropriate for me to make my remarks?

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, it is appropriate for the Senator from Mississippi to speak. It is appropriate to yield to other Senators, but they are not here at this time.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I wish to say what a pleasure it is to work with my partner, the senior Senator from Mississippi, Mr. COCHRAN. He is always a gentleman and very thorough and capable and competent in his leadership as a legislator and as chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

I must say, I am quite pleased the chairman of the Appropriations Com-

mittee hails from my State. I thank him for his generosity personally and his comments and all he does to offer comfort on a personal basis.

I thank him for leading in this particular effort and moving this supplemental forward. We are both here, but our hearts are in Mississippi now. We are here because we want to make sure these funds are available and that they will get to the people and we will not have the important agencies that are involved run out of money in a day or two, or three.

I thank Senator BYRD for calling me last week to check on me. I called him back and talked with him yesterday. He was very kind and very generous. I want people to know we do check on each other and check on each other's wives. He has been very generous with that. I thank these two men for their leadership, and I thank the Senate for their personal concerns.

A lot of Senators are not just offering concerns, they are offering help. They are sending truckloads of help. They are making personal contributions to charities. It is very heartwarming on both sides of the aisle.

I was pleased to see the House take this matter up promptly and pass it overwhelmingly. Over 400 House Members voted for it; 11 voted nay. Now we have it, and we have an agreement with the leadership on the Democratic side that we would have a time limit and that we were not going to have a long amendment process because this money is needed.

I want to emphasize to my colleague that we want to make sure this money gets to the right place, the right people, and in the right way. We will be very careful to make sure these contracts are done properly.

I was speaking to the Governor of our State a few minutes ago. They are going to be monitoring this very carefully. We have the best quality of elected officials in my State we ever had, Democrat and Republican. I believe that. We have leaders up and down the line in the State offices, and we have young, dynamic mayors who had their towns wiped out. We have old experienced mayors who can pull all the communities together, and they are doing a wonderful job. Supervisors are doing a great job too.

We will monitor this very closely. We are not asking for a handout, but we do need help. We need a "handup." We want to get our people where they at least are safe and secure. Right now health concerns, for instance, are bothering me very greatly. My wife is digging through the rubble now. I said: Please don't get cut accidentally, and watch out for snakes. One of the many things that comes with hurricanes, people do not realize, is the snakes blow in, and when the water goes out, they stay. I am nervous with her digging around in our neighborhood looking for some of our things that are left.

We are going to need help from HHS to make sure we have medical atten-

tion, personnel, equipment, chemicals, and drugs to help from the Mississippi gulf coast right into New Orleans. Of course, they will have a distinctly different problem in New Orleans.

A massive effort is underway. I have had people say to me: \$1 billion a day, how could that be? You ought to see what is going on and you ought to see the need.

The Coast Guard has been fantastic. They have saved lives, and they are working today. The Corps of Engineers has been working to clear the channels. The Navy has ships in the area. The *Iwo Jima* is in New Orleans. The *Bataan* and the *Truman* are off the coast of Mississippi. The USNS *Comfort* is pulling into the area so we can house personnel, people who need help if the hospitals can't help them, and to give people a place to spend a night inside and get a good meal. This has never been done before, so there is a massive effort.

Senator COCHRAN and I flew from Biloxi, MS, over to New Orleans, and then I came back on a helicopter last Friday. It was similar to being in a war zone. Honestly—fires burning, water rising, helicopters bringing in injured people. There were helicopters all over the place. I was very nervous, quite frankly.

The point I am trying to make is, there is a huge effort underway, a big push of supplies, equipment, people who are working to save people's lives to this very day and to give us a chance to get back up so we can help people go back to work.

It is the worst I have ever seen. For 37 years, I have dealt with hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, ice storms, everything but locusts, and I am expecting them to arrive very soon. But this beats all I have ever seen, and it is going to be so hard to deal with the magnitude of the debris, let alone the human tragedies with which we are going to be dealing.

We need this help. We need this money. Some people are saying it is not going perfectly well. It never does. I have been through this every time. Every time we have trouble getting temporary housing into the area. We have trouble moving them from Georgia, pre-positioned in Mississippi, so we can get them to the people. We are having that problem now. The size and the magnitude of this disaster is so big that things are not going to happen fast enough, and there are going to be problems and slip-ups.

I do not think we should take time to be damning mistakes made last week. I want to know what the problems are today, what is the solution, and what actions we are going to take. I am very proud of that.

I want to also say, yesterday I put a list in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of private companies and organizations that have just gone beyond the call of duty—money, supplies. There are also hundreds of heroic acts, humanitarian acts where people went beyond the call

of duty to save lives to help other people—veterans who were rescued from the Gulfport VA Hospital, nurses who went without water themselves for 3 days to look after their patients.

I am going to put in the RECORD a whole list of these stories of great human efforts to help other people, sacrifices that people made, people who loaded up vans and showed up. A woman minister from Illinois loaded up a van, hitched to a pickup truck, drove herself to Mississippi, went to a church parking lot without any prearrangement and started distributing supplies. That story will be told a hundred and thousands of times over.

I want to make the point that this is a lot of money, I know it, and I am sorry we have to spend it the way we do. I prefer we not have this problem, but it is there, it is real. This is America. Americans have proven over and over again how charitable we are and how we will come to the rescue of people when they are in need and when they are hurt.

Let me say, too, about my State, I am proud of my State. We have been working and pushing. We are getting the job done. We will come back bigger, better, stronger, and we will continue to be an important part of this great country and a part of our economy.

Mr. President, I know I have used too much time of all other time that has to be yielded, but I thank my colleagues, one and all, for this opportunity to express my feelings. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, every single one of us in this body is going to support this supplemental appropriation for those who have suffered so much in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. We will do everything we can to help them. I know we will have another supplemental in the near future. I want to make sure that everyone realizes that there are now States that have taken the evacuees and done it with open hearts and open arms. We want to do everything to make them comfortable. That includes educating children. It includes medical care and Medicaid reimbursements that will be necessary.

It is my hope that the next supplemental will include help for the school districts that are taking large numbers of these students and are not able to absorb all of those costs in a way that would assure that these children, as well as the children who are already in the school district, have the quality education we are all striving to have.

As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee of Appropriations, I have just seen pictures today of the facilities that have been damaged in Biloxi, MS, and in New Orleans. I know we are going to need supplemental appropriations to begin the process of planning how we will rebuild facilities to serve patients in these areas. I will certainly vote in support of this with total commitment. But I do hope that

the next supplemental that goes through will have some of these issues that will help the people rather than just the three States that have the infrastructure as well as the people problems. Let us give the services that all of us want to give to them as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, in a few days, on Sunday, we will mark the fourth anniversary of September 11. I remember very well the extraordinary support, the kindness, the solidarity, the friendship shown by our colleagues toward my State. The Federal response, the congressional actions, matched by the extraordinary generosity of the American people made what was the worst manmade disaster in our Nation's history somewhat bearable because we knew that despite what the terrorists had done, America stood with us.

We are now confronting the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history. On behalf of the people of New York, I publicly express our solidarity, our support, and our friendship. I am very familiar with the gulf coast. I went to Biloxi, MS, and the Mississippi gulf coast as a teenager. I have had a lot of opportunities to travel through Mississippi when I lived all those wonderful years in Arkansas. We also spent a lot of time in Louisiana. We had friends in Baton Rouge and Lafayette and lots of friends in New Orleans and surrounding parishes. Of course, I have been in Mobile. I have been along the gulf coast of Alabama. So I can personally see in my mind's eye what Senators are speaking of.

Senator LOTT spoke about what happened to Mississippi, and Senator COCHRAN spoke about the devastation being greater than anything he had ever seen or experienced. Senator LANDRIEU and Senator VITTER try to describe what it is like for everything one knows and everything that is familiar to be gone.

I imagine those days and nights of friendship and good times that I had the privilege of spending in such a wonderful part of our country. So I am very proud of how America is responding once again. The generosity of countless Americans—even people far beyond our shores want to contribute to try to help put lives and communities back together. It is entirely fitting that our Federal Government, that this Congress would be acting to pass in an expeditious manner this important supplemental so that the work of cleanup, recovery, even hopefully of rebuilding, can begin. I believe that when we vote, as we will, this evening, it will send a very tangible message that the Congress understands and that on behalf of the American people we will be with the people of the gulf coast until they, too, can recover and rebuild.

Just as we did after 9/11, there are many questions we should be answering. When I was in Houston this past

Monday with my husband, President and Mrs. Bush, and Senator OBAMA, hundreds of people surrounded us asking questions to which we do not yet know the answers. There is a lot of false information, misinformation about what happened, should have happened, did not happen. People are grabbing at whatever they hear, trying to make sense of a devastating experience that has totally transformed their lives and their futures.

I respect the fact that our leaders in the Senate and the House have commenced hearings in the Governmental Affairs Committee and that there was an announcement yesterday about a bicameral effort to try to look into what did happen. But I would respectfully suggest that just as with 9/11, we need an independent commission that will look in depth and will bring to that inquiry independent expertise, people who are not elected officials, people who can look with a very cold and calm eye at the facts and the evidence so that we in the Congress, in the executive branch and State and local governments and, most importantly, the American public, can have some sense that we understand, so far as it is humanly possible, what was done and what could have been done.

The reason for the independent commission is not only because I believe we need to replicate the 9/11 Commission to send a clear message that we are open to looking anywhere and everywhere to find the answers that the people are demanding but also because we do not have the luxury of having officials in the executive and congressional branch diverting their attention to this inquiry, beginning the process of compiling evidence, of interviewing witnesses, of holding hearings. We are now required to focus on the future on behalf of not only the people of the gulf coast but on behalf of our constituents as well. We are spending a lot of money and we will be spending a lot more to ensure that we treat fairly, equitably, and with accountability the needs people have right now and in the months and years ahead.

Therefore, I would hope that we will come to a bipartisan agreement to establish such a commission, exactly as the 9/11 Commission functioned, with 10 members, the President appointing the chair, the other members being appointed by the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and the Senate, that they will be people of independence and integrity, and that they will, in a sense, be the surrogates for all Americans as they try to make sense of how could this have happened.

I chanced upon a television program the other night that was recounting responses from people around the world—places that know their fair share of disaster—who were asking: How could this happen in the United States of America? It did not make sense to them. They would not have been surprised if it had happened in some poor country,

some country without an elaborate bureaucracy intended to deal with disasters, but they were shocked. They were asking questions. Perhaps the most important reason for us to convene this commission and get it working immediately is because we need these answers to ensure that whatever happens in the future will be better handled.

There are lessons for all levels of government, and there are probably lessons for those of us in the Congress. We have no idea what Mother Nature has in store for us. We are not even at the peak of hurricane season yet.

I remember going to Homestead, FL, in 1992 to see the impact of Hurricane Andrew. It was late August, early September, and we were only on the A's. Hurricane Andrew was an A. We are already to K, and we have M and others forming out in the ocean and the gulf. We need these answers to protect ourselves. We need to clear away all of the confusion, the natural tendency of human beings to say: It was not me, it was somebody else; oh no, wait, it was somebody else indeed. We need to just calmly, dispassionately conduct this investigation as quickly as possible to get the answers we need.

I do not think there is any doubt any longer that the Department of Homeland Security, for understandable reasons that I certainly, as a Senator from New York, understand and appreciate, turned much of its attention to the war against terrorism. People drilled, people met, people worried about a bioterrorist attack, a chemical attack, a radiological or, heaven forbid, a nuclear attack. But in the meantime, we have to worry about natural disasters, too, which we have just seen. There were thousands—millions—of people who had to be evacuated. People lost everything. Businesses are gone. It is certainly fair to say that it will have a devastating effect on the gulf coast, but it will ripple through the economy as well.

So I would hope that I would find support in the days to come for the bill I have introduced, the Katrina Commission bill. I have also offered it as an amendment to Commerce-Justice-State, but that we could come to a nonpartisan agreement to do this piece of the people's business, to answer the questions and to make sure this never happens again.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no one yields time, the time will be charged to all parties.

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, under the order, there was 30 minutes reserved for the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma. All of the time on our side on this bill has been used. His is the only time available on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I believe under the agreement that I have

been allocated 5 minutes; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

First, I wish to mention to our Senate colleagues that of the \$51 billion we are considering on the supplemental, there is no funding for education. Under the leadership of Senator ENZI, our committee has had 2 days of hearings with leaders from Louisiana and from the gulf area about what is happening in the education system and the important need to give help and assistance to local communities, not only in those areas but also that have taken students across this country.

I talked to the Secretary of Education this afternoon, and she indicated that she had submitted to the President a series of recommendations that she hopes we can act on in the next very few days, and I hope that will be the case. Otherwise, I think we are missing an extremely important opportunity to try to provide help and assistance in an area of enormous importance to families. There are—85,000 students in the public schools in New Orleans who have lost their education, 35,000 or 40,000 in private schools, and the list goes on.

The second point is I heard that the President had now waived the Davis-Bacon provisions in terms of construction. I am not going to spend a great deal of time on the Davis-Bacon provisions, but I believe it is a great mistake. What we have seen time in and time out when we have debated this issue, this is about quality and the deliverance on time to meet construction requirements.

I am deeply disappointed that President Bush has decided to suspend wage protections in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Many people harmed by Hurricane Katrina were already struggling to make ends meet, and the jobs and businesses they relied on have disappeared. Experts have said that as many as 1 million workers may become unemployed as a result of the hurricane, with the unemployment rate reaching 25 percent or higher in the gulf region. Many affected workers will be unemployed for 9 months or longer.

One of the major opportunities for work will be in the recovery and rebuilding of the area. We need to be sure that these new jobs pay decent wages. This is all that Davis-Bacon does: it simply ensures that workers on Federal Government projects earn a typical wage. The whole purpose of this law is to ensure that Federal funds do not undermine local labor markets by driving down wages.

Workers who take these jobs will already face special hazards. We heard just yesterday that according to this administration, the floodwaters in New Orleans contain e.coli that is ten-times higher than acceptable safety limits. We cannot allow Federal funds to undercut these workers' condition even further by lowering wage rates. But the

President apparently believes that workers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama don't even deserve to earn a decent wage for a day's work.

Opponents of Davis-Bacon would have you believe that its wages are exorbitant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, in areas affected by Katrina, some typical wages include:

\$9.16 per hour for sheet metal workers in Pearl River County, MS;

\$10 per hour for laborers in Livingston Parish, LA;

\$8.54 hour for truckdrivers in Mobile County, AL

Haven't these workers and their families suffered enough? We are providing tens of billions of dollars in relief, and we should be sure that it goes toward decent wages for workers as they work to rebuild the vital infrastructure that is so desperately needed. We have had those protections so we have had quality. One of the things the American people are very concerned about is shabby work. That is certainly true about the people whose family houses are going to be rebuilt and buildings going to be restored. They deserve the best. One of the best ways is to make sure we are going to have the skilled personnel to be able to do it. I regret the President's decision.

On a final point, we find now that we have appropriated some \$10.5 billion previously and now \$51.5 billion this evening. Those funds will go through existing institutions, through FEMA, through Homeland Security. It ought to be understood by the American people that those agencies have extremely important functions to provide for our country. Homeland Security has to look after the challenges for all of our Nation. They have to protect from the dangers of terrorism in our ports in Seattle, WA, and Boston, MA, and Los Angeles. They have other challenges across this nation. They cannot spend the time, the effort, the energy, the focus just on rebuilding the gulf area.

FEMA has 35 different challenges this year that they are going to have to address. They cannot be expected to devote their time, effort, and energy just on the gulf development.

I think the best way to do that is to follow a past tradition, a tradition that goes back to the time of President Coolidge. When we had flooding of the Mississippi in the 1920s, what did he do? He selected Herbert Hoover to coordinate all of the efforts, to be above the discord, so to speak; to coordinate efforts to make sure we were going to have focus and attention and we were going to bring all the parties to the table; to make sure we were going to do this while ensuring the grants, the development, and the investments that were going to be made were going to meet the highest criteria of integrity and would be done in the most comprehensive and complete way.

This is not only from a construction point of view, an environmental point of view, but also for the restoration of

the lives of the people in those areas and to ensure, as we are going to rebuild those areas, we are going to make this available to the people in that area so they are going to be part of the reconstruction of their lives.

This is going to be enormously important. There are going to be training programs available to them, so they will feel part of this whole reconstruction, which is a key thing to the American family.

We are one country. We have one destiny. To make sure we are going to have one country and one destiny and one future, we have to make sure we have the opportunity to have a commission of integrity, made up of the very best of our society, one that ensures the integrity of those investments and makes sure those people whose lives are so affected, who are uprooted, are going to get the very best. I hope that would be an area where we could come together, Republican and Democrat alike, and eventually gain support. I know our leader has talked about it, as has Senator LANDRIEU. I have had the opportunity to talk to other Senators about it. Hopefully, we can develop that opportunity to ensure the kind of reconstruction that all Americans want to see.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time? The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was led to believe that I had 5 minutes. I don't know if time is controlled?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes 50 seconds.

Mr. DURBIN. Close enough.

Mr. President, we estimate the cost of Hurricane Katrina could reach \$150 billion. Some Senators speculate even more. We are passing a second supplemental appropriations bill which I assume will pass unanimously: \$51.8 billion on top of \$10.5 billion last week and no end in sight. This is an enormous responsibility, a responsibility that challenges us in terms of our Nation's budget priorities.

Hurricane Katrina has redrawn the map of the gulf coast. It has also redrawn the budget in Washington. When we reached an agreement earlier this year on a budget, it was a much different environment. We did not anticipate the staggering expenses of Hurricane Katrina. Some did not anticipate the continuing costs of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, which should never be forgotten. We included in that budget resolution a proposal for \$70 billion in tax cuts, the first time in the history of the United States of America we suggested we would make tax cuts in the midst of a war. Usually, a President calls on the Nation to sacrifice during a war, to understand that we each have to give a little to help our troops overseas. This administration suggested the opposite. For the most well off in America, we proposed cutting their taxes in the midst of a war and in the face of the largest deficits in the history of the United States of America.

That was before hurricane Katrina. The world has changed. The deficit for this year has been estimated to be \$331 billion. Can we add \$70 billion to that in tax cuts for the wealthiest people in America? Even worse, the estimated cumulative deficit over the next 10 years has been estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to be \$2.1 trillion. This is before Katrina—before the tax cuts. Can we afford to add \$70 billion in tax cuts, primarily for the wealthiest people in America, to that astounding historic deficit? We cannot. I think most right-thinking people on both sides of the aisle now realize that.

Let's be clear. The wrong way to attempt to shrink this deficit would be to cut \$35 billion in domestic spending, including \$10 billion in cuts in Medicaid, the health insurance program for those who are homeless now because of Katrina and the most disadvantaged in America.

At a time when Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and other Gulf States are struggling to help these people in need, and other States such as my own State of Illinois and so many others are reaching out to help them; at a time when public health challenges are reaching epidemic proportions; at a time when States are struggling on their own to meet their budget responsibility, we cannot cut \$10 billion in Medicaid payments to the States.

Thousands of people who did not evacuate New Orleans before the storm couldn't leave the city simply because they couldn't afford to leave. As my colleague, Senator OBAMA, said so often, they couldn't fill up the SUV with \$100 of gas, put in the bottled water and head out with a credit card to a hotel in some other State to wait it out. That was impossible.

They faced the reality of poverty and the reality of disaster. We have to face the reality of our budget. Our budget tells us that we cannot cut in Homeland Security, we cannot cut in FEMA, we certainly can't cut the safety net that so many Americans rely on.

The Homeland Security Department needs more resources than ever, particularly for FEMA, and to restore the confidence in America that this agency is truly prepared for the next disaster, whatever it happens to be—whether it is a natural disaster, God forbid, or a terrorist disaster. Our confidence has been shaken in the Department of Homeland Security. We believed that we were safe, and in a few hours we learned, with the disaster on the Gulf Coast, that in many ways we are not.

We couldn't keep the flood waters out of New Orleans once that hurricane had turned. But can we tell America that we are prepared to keep the next flood, the next hurricane, the next disaster from creating what is a shameful situation now facing us across America?

This storm should compel us to reexamine our priorities. A budget document represents a set of moral choices

not just fiscal choices. For the past 5 years, we have chosen wealthy persons over working Americans, pharmaceutical companies over seniors, oil companies over the environment, and defense contractors over veterans. It is time to change those priorities.

I will vote for this money. I believe all Senators will probably vote for this money to help our victims. But let us be honest about the realities, the budget challenges we face. Let us understand that a tax holiday for the wealthiest people in America is not appropriate—not this week, not next week, and not any time this year, as we face the reality of a war in Iraq, which continues to claim lives every single day, and this catastrophe of Katrina, which is going to test our moral fiber.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time? The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I thank the leadership for giving me an opportunity to talk this evening and to express some views. We heard a very good talk about the budget. The points I was going to make have to do with the disasters we face. It is "disasters"—it is not one, it is two. One is slowly creeping upon us, and the other is right in front of us.

The tragedy that we see on the gulf coast is something to which we have to attend, something for which we have to supply the funds. It is important that we offer aid, that we come to the aid of those people. One of the most disheartening things I have seen in the last week-and-a-half has been finger pointing by politicians at all levels of our country that benefits no one, accomplishes nothing except to prove to the American people partisanship tends to trump any issue. It is disheartening that we as a body would fall into that, when such great responsibilities are in front of us.

I said "disasters" because the other disaster we are not looking at is the Federal budget that the Senator from Illinois discussed. I take a very different view. I am disappointed in our President for not bringing forward with this bill recommended spending cuts that would easily be achieved in the discretionary budget of this country to pay for the disaster assistance. We heard Senator LOTT talk about the sacrifices of the people, both those who are involved and those who have contributed to help in this tragedy. It is no sacrifice on the part of Congress to steal \$51.2 billion from our grandchildren to supply the need now without doing the hard work that Americans would expect of us to make sure our priorities are right. It is a time for leadership in this country.

Our budget deficit, after we pass this bill, will be \$670 billion this year. That is the real deficit. That comes to over \$2,000 per man, woman, and child in this country this year alone. So we have two disasters. One is that we have chosen political expediency over the

future of our country. The heritage that our country leaves us and has been given to us is one of sacrifice to preserve the opportunities for the next generation.

We are going to do what is right for the people on the gulf coast, I have no doubt. But we are not doing what is right for the generations that are beyond us, for our children and our grandchildren. It takes courage to stand up and say we can do better. We have heard that. But we have not ever talked about how we can do better. We have talked about how agencies can do better. The way we do better is by finally starting to make the hard choices on priorities for our country.

The President, in his budget proposal this year, recommend 99 programs to be eliminated that did not meet an assessment rating program that was developed by OMB. That program was many times agreed to by many people in this body. That was \$19.6 billion. There is not the courage coming from the executive branch to offer those, to say we are not going to spend another \$19.6 billion of our grandchildren's money. Yet we are going to do the easy thing. We should pay for this. We should pass this bill, but we should not pass it on the backs of our children and our grandchildren.

I have a message for Americans out there. We have seen so many great efforts at contribution. Oklahoma has 3,800 people from Louisiana now, and we are going to love them and care for them and do everything we can to help those individuals in our State. But everybody else in this country can make a sacrifice, too. There is no charity without sacrifice. If it doesn't cost you anything, it is not worth much.

What we have to do is look at every level of the Government, every operation of the Government, and say: Where can we do better? I have talked to hundreds and hundreds of Federal employees who know where the waste is in their departments and in their agencies. Now is the time to come forward. The doctors in this country, you can save Medicare a ton. The hospitals in this country, you can save Medicare a ton. This year alone, trim your bills, cut back 4 or 5 percent. Do what is hard for you but gives benefit to the future. We need to set a standard that we are going to do what is right, both in this generation and in the generations that follow us.

We have an oath to uphold the Constitution, but we have a higher oath, and that higher oath is to keep the obligations that our forefathers put forward to create the best, brightest, the country providing the most opportunity of any in the world.

We will borrow internationally this year \$1.4 trillion. How many years do you think the international financial community will continue to allow us to borrow that money without some cost coming home?

I believe we should have made the effort to pay for part of this supplemental spending.

I believe it is easy for us not to make that effort. I think it is very hard if we choose to make the effort. I believe if we do not step up to the responsibilities given to us by not attempting to make us better, by not attempting to root out the waste—examples: Last year, 2004, the Federal Government overpaid \$41.5 billion for things it bought or handed out. That would almost pay for this bill, if we would eliminate that. We can eliminate it. We choose not to do the oversight that is necessary to find the problems to make us more efficient, to accomplish the very goals to create the opportunity in the future for the next generation.

I will vote for this bill. But I am noticing our Members that we should do better; we should do what is expected of us; we should make the hard choices people expect us to make rather than to go to an unending piggy bank of debt and defer those choices to our grandchildren.

What does that mean? It means our grandchildren are going to have a far lower standard of living as we try to continue to load this debt on them. That is not opportunity. That is not a heritage I want to be involved with. I want to follow the heritage of our forefathers and the great generation of World War II where sacrifice was made.

I believe it is incumbent upon us to do better. I challenge every Member of this body to start doing the oversight, to find the areas where we can be better, where we can spend less money now—not because it may not be a great project—where we don't spend \$26.5 billion in earmarks on a highway bill, the New York Times today listed ways we could help pay by eliminating earmarks and pork.

I find it ironic that I am agreeing with editorials in the New York Times. But they are right. The American people should demand of us now to make the very hard choices of ordering our priorities. Not doing that is below what every individual Member of this body is about.

I challenge Members as we look forward to the next supplemental which we consider if there is an area in the Federal Government that isn't working well where we could save money. The assumption on other side of that is the Federal Government is 100-percent efficient. If there is not any place where we can find money to trim to pay for that, that means the Federal Government is working perfectly. There is not a person in this country who believes that.

I know this talk about finding the money falls on deaf ears to many Members of this body. I am not partisan in any way except I am partisan for the future of our country. We cannot continue to live beyond our means.

The individuals out there who sent \$20 to the American Red Cross didn't go freely to get \$20 to buy the next ice cream cone or go to the next

Starbucks. They gave up something to give that money. We need to be doing the same, and hardship is required. We need to stand up—Democrats, Republicans, individuals—and lead on the issue of efficiency and accuracy and the ordering of priorities; it is most important.

Is it important right now to spend \$200 million on a bridge to 50 people in Alaska? Is that important? Should we be doing that when we could spend \$200 million helping people in New Orleans or Mississippi? There isn't going to be anybody except 50 people and two Senators and one Congressman who thinks that is a good priority. We ought to be adjusting what we have done to pay for this.

The other final point I would make, it was suggested to the administration and it was rejected, but we need a controller for this money under the Office of the President to make sure it is spent properly. If we have the legislation that is already authorizing that, it is available, it should be put forward. I am going to offer that legislation next week to make sure it is spent right. The President has authorized in good will an inspector general increase to look at it, but they won't be controlling the money. What they do is see how it is spent after the fact. We need somebody in charge of spending before it is spent to make sure it is a priority before it goes down there, as we should be doing here.

I thank the body for the time and the effort. I believe it is incumbent on us to secure the future of this country. We can be critical of FEMA, but if we are not critical of our own positions in how we have spent our children's and our grandchildren's future, we have no right to be critical of any other agency of this Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on passage of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I extend my appreciation to President Bush for making this request that is now before the Senate. It contains important money for the victims of Katrina, and I will support it. However, before we vote, my colleagues should know that this bill is seriously flawed in several ways.

First, all the money for the relief effort—most of the money in the bill—goes to FEMA. After what we have witnessed these past 10 days, is there anyone in America who feels we should

continue to rely exclusively on FEMA to head the Federal Government's response? I think not.

Second, the President's request fails to make the substantive changes in law necessary to address many of the critical needs of our survivors—notably health care, housing, education, and financial relief. Victims need this assistance, and they need it now. But this legislation before the Senate tonight makes no such changes. It only spends more money.

Again, let me be clear. Despite these flaws, my Democratic colleagues and I will support this supplemental. We simply must do everything we can for the victims of Katrina.

That said, I would like to remind the Senate we cannot rest with the passage of this supplemental. There is much more work we need to do, and there are dozens of steps the Senate should take quickly to get the victims the relief they need.

Along with Senator LANDRIEU and many of my colleagues today, I introduced legislation called the Katrina Emergency Relief Act that makes the changes in law we need to give survivors the relief they need right now.

For example, health care. The survivors of Katrina need health coverage. Some of them were already uninsured. Others may have had insurance but they have been relocated miles from home and lost their insurance when they lost their jobs.

Here is how the Senate could help. We can ease enrollment into Medicaid so that survivors get Medicaid benefits without regard to assets and income. These people do not have the necessary documents to prove their residency or their needs. But we can make all that irrelevant by easing enrollment. We can also assure States that the Federal Government will pick up the tab for any health services they provide survivors.

Regarding housing, FEMA has estimated that up to 1 million people may be left homeless by Katrina and require housing assistance. Many will lack the standard paperwork to apply for Government assistance and will face steep rents as affordable housing is already limited for many. Yet FEMA is ill-equipped to handle the housing needs of Katrina's victims, many of whom are scattered around the country and will need housing for an extended period.

Regarding this housing, here is how the Senate can help. We could very easily direct legislatively the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide housing vouchers that survivors can use anywhere to get out of shelters and into a home. We have all seen the images of families sleeping in the convention center or in the Astrodome, at the Superdome or at our armory here in Washington, DC or in universities in Nevada or in States all across this country. The Senator from Arkansas has indicated that 60,000 people who are victims of the gulf disaster

are now in Arkansas. We must help them get off the cots and into real homes.

About education, the Katrina disaster struck as school was set to begin. Thousands of kids have lost their classrooms. They have lost their teachers. They have nowhere to go. No student should miss a single day. Here is how the Senate could help. Again, it is pretty simple. We can give school districts \$2,500 for each displaced student they enroll. It will help offset their costs, and it will encourage some of them to open their doors. We have a lot of school districts that are suffering financially. We can help school districts get other resources. For example, they need to deal with bigger classes—help with teachers, textbooks, material, and counselors who are badly needed.

What about financial assistance? Senator LIEBERMAN has legislation, which is his part of our package, that shows not only have hundreds of thousands of Americans lost their homes but they have lost their jobs and their livelihood for now and any time in the near future. It will take time for Americans to get back on their feet. And here is how the Senate can help. We can temporarily forgive victims of their financial obligations for the Federal Government—things such as student loans and Small Business loans. We can help people so they don't lose their homes because they lost their jobs to Katrina and can't make the payments. We can extend unemployment insurance for these victims who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. The joblessness rate is expected to increase to 25 percent or higher in the region, and we need to make sure unemployment benefits are available.

We can make it easier for victims to use their own savings to get back on their feet. Some may have Individual Retirement Accounts which they could draw from at this time, and we can make it easy for them to access money by suspending taxes on such withdrawals.

All of these are steps we could have taken today. A number of these amendments have been presented on the Commerce, State, Justice bill. But there are points of order raised against it because the rules of the Senate are such that you can't have legislation on an appropriations bill.

We had hoped the Senate would act on these items promptly, and that is why we introduced four amendments this afternoon to the Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill that I have described in some detail. But rather than voting on our efforts, as I have said, the majority plans to raise procedural objections. It is unfortunate. Victims of Katrina don't care about the Senate procedures. They just know they need health care, housing, and school for their children—not more Federal redtape.

My colleagues and I will continue to fight for these items in the days ahead.

People who have lost their jobs and everything they have ever worked for don't care if they get Democratic relief or Republican relief. They want relief, and they want it now.

In the days ahead, victims of Katrina and the American people will want something in addition to short-term relief. I think it is important that we begin to address this. Survivors and the American people will want at least two things—a long-term plan to rebuild the gulf coast and answers about why the Government failed them.

To rebuild the gulf coast, we need to think about a Marshall plan.

I have something I have worked on for a number of years that was moving along very strongly prior to September 11, the American Marshall Plan. Remember, for every \$1 billion we spend on developing our infrastructure, we create 47,500 jobs. We need a Marshall Plan to reconstruct the gulf region, a plan on par with the one we used to rebuild Europe after World War II. This is a region rich in culture and steeped in our history. It must be rebuilt, and we need a grand plan to rebuild it.

While we rebuild the gulf coast, we make sure we do not do it on the backs of American workers. I have been told the President has decided to suspend Davis-Bacon, a bill on the books for 60-plus years. It works because it creates an even playing field for workers. I will object if the President decides to do this. This is a time to work together and restore lives, not to play partisan politics.

We also need to find out why the Federal Government failed the people of the gulf coast when they needed their Government the most. Following September 11, preparedness for national emergencies was supposed to be a priority for this Government. Americans were made to believe the Government was doing everything it could to prepare for terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other natural crises. Katrina makes it clear that we aren't ready.

When we faced a similar situation after September 11, Democrats and Republicans came together and established an independent blue ribbon commission. We now want to do this. We must do this. It will happen. It is only a question of when it will happen.

I have been told the majority in the Senate and in the House wants a different approach. They unveiled, very loosely, a proposal to investigate the events of last week. They call it a bicameral committee. Please. We have down at 16th and Pennsylvania Avenue an announcement by the President that he is going to be the leader of the investigation. We certainly do not need the same thing in the Senate. We have committees of jurisdiction that can do the work, and we must have, as Senator CLINTON has proposed, this bipartisan commission. It is very important. I support this commission. The victims deserve an answer independent of politics—the kind of answers only an independent commission can deliver.

I appreciate the patience of my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Very briefly, Mr. President, this supplemental will be the last vote of the evening and for the week. We will be here tomorrow to continue business on Commerce-Justice-Science. Amendments can be offered either tonight or tomorrow. There will be no rollcall votes tomorrow. We will be voting on Monday. Instead of 5:30, it will be a little later than that. We will announce that specific time on Monday.

We will finish Commerce-Justice-Science early next week. Senators should not wait to offer amendments. Either offer them tonight or tomorrow. We will wrap this bill up in the very early part of next week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 223 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Akaka	Dodd	Martinez
Alexander	Dole	McCain
Allard	Domenici	McConnell
Allen	Dorgan	Mikulski
Baucus	Durbin	Murkowski
Bayh	Ensign	Murray
Bennett	Enzi	Nelson (FL)
Biden	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Feinstein	Obama
Bond	Frist	Pryor
Boxer	Graham	Reed
Brownback	Grassley	Reid
Bunning	Gregg	Roberts
Burns	Hagel	Rockefeller
Burr	Harkin	Salazar
Byrd	Hatch	Santorum
Cantwell	Hutchison	Sarbanes
Carper	Inhofe	Schumer
Chafee	Isakson	Sessions
Chambliss	Jeffords	Shelby
Clinton	Johnson	Smith
Coburn	Kennedy	Snowe
Cochran	Kerry	Kohl
Coleman	Kohl	Specter
Collins	Kyl	Stabenow
Conrad	Landrieu	Sununu
Cornyn	Lautenberg	Talent
Corzine	Leahy	Thomas
Craig	Levin	Thune
Crapo	Lieberman	Voinovich
Dayton	Lincoln	Warner
DeMint	Lott	Wyden
DeWine	Lugar	

NOT VOTING—3

Inouye	Stevens	Vitter
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The bill (H.R. 3673) was passed.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the bill was passed.

Mr. DURBIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from West Virginia for his cooperation in the development and presentation of this bill to the Senate. I also especially thank the Congressman from California, JERRY LEWIS, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and his colleagues on that committee, both Democrat and Republican, who helped get that bill passed today in the House of Representatives. We appreciate the prompt action on the President's request. We thank all Senators for their cooperation in agreeing to the expedited procedure for consideration of the bill today and passing the bill. This will get needed relief to the disaster victims in coastal States of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, the Gulf Coast, and others who have been injured and victimized by this disaster. We thank the leadership for scheduling the bill and for supporting our efforts to get the bill done today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

POSTDISASTER RESPONSE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to discuss, for a moment on the record, what I have been telling some Senators individually and in groups about the management of postdisaster activities in the Gulf Coast area. Let me begin by saying that I am not going to add to the various discussions being had about who should decide what persons, if any, made mistakes in terms of controlling this disaster, the scourge of this hurricane. Did somebody not do what they were supposed to do or did somebody do it too late? If so, who was it, when did the mistake occur, and why did the person act as they did? That is, who was at fault in responding to this natural disaster, if anyone. I am not talking about that. I hear the rancor and the partisanship in the discussion about who should do that.

I am talking about the fact that we have now the most difficult situation that America on its homeland has ever had to manage. We have never had anything as difficult as this to manage—the confusion, disrepair, individual suffering, displacement, hardship, property destruction, pollution. All of those things affected literally hundreds of thousands of people in three-plus States. We are currently in the immediate aftermath of the force that brought all those things upon us as a nation.

How many people have been displaced—sometimes called refugees, but they will not be referred to as such by me—how many men, women, and children? I understand that the numbers displaced due to a natural disaster before this did not exceed 30,000. It was something under 30,000. For this one disaster, there were over 450,000 people

displaced. Anybody who thinks that what we have in place to manage a crisis of this magnitude is fine doesn't understand the proportions of this event. We don't have in place the tools, the wherewithal, the ability to manage this problem—not from the time of its arrival and not now, as we work to gradually make the situation better for everybody, to a point in time that we can take a deep breath and say: We have done as much as we can for as many as we can, and as far as our country and its people and its businesses and its charities are concerned, we have completed the task of responding to this emergency.

We don't have any way of doing that. Anybody who is sitting around here contemplating the work of its committee, be it a chairman of a committee or the chairman of a subcommittee, and thinking they know how to do that, let me tell you, they don't. I regret to say it. In all deference, I am one of those chairmen. I have a standing committee and a subcommittee. They are both involved in this event. One is Energy and Natural Resources. The other is Appropriations for Energy and Water, which is literally all the energy around there, pipelines and the like, and the Corps of Engineers. So I could be saying I will do my share. I will start having hearings. But I submit that this work that I would do and that any other committee of the Congress would do is as apt to be meaningless or wrong or moving in the wrong direction, when looked at a year from now, as it is to be appropriate.

It isn't that we are doing anything wrong; it is that we don't know what our goal is. We don't know where we are going. We know people need checks. We know people need money. We know people need accelerated Social Security and Medicaid benefits. We also know people need housing. But does that mean we should hold a hearing in the housing Appropriations Committee and decide: Here is a new program. We are going to fund the program. It will be grants and loans, 100,000 new houses for these people? Of course it doesn't mean that at all.

We need somebody to put the plan together and decide what the housing situation is going to be like for these people. Do we need interim help? Will that be vouchers? And who will start putting that together? I could go on. This is not because anybody has not done their job. Forget about that. Whatever the job that was to be done, right or wrong, is finished. What you have to do now is rehabilitate, replan, and put in place what must be done within the laws of America, with the dollars of our taxpayers.

I came here in 1972, believe it or not. I was 39 years old. I don't know how I got here or why I was here. I got a great big assignment, one committee, Public Works. You new Senators who worry about your committee assignments these days, I only had one. I got