

time for us to dedicate the resources to rebuilding and strengthening America, rather than strengthening the coffers of a few corporations that happen to have political connections. That is our responsibility.

I hope my colleagues in the Senate and the House will gather together and understand that rebuilding our Nation is our first responsibility. We must understand that the least fortunate among us need our help today. They are more vulnerable than they have ever been.

We cannot change the past, but now with another hurricane moving across the Gulf of Mexico, we can work together in a bipartisan way to change the future. America can certainly do better.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and 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. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

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

HURRICANES AND THE PRICE OF OIL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, Hurricane Rita, bearing down on the gulf coast of Texas, perhaps Louisiana again, a category 5, with winds that have gotten up to 175 miles an hour, is very similar to Hurricane Katrina 3 or 4 weeks ago. It sprang up as a category 1, hitting south Florida first. Katrina did quite a bit of damage, as you would expect with winds in the range of 80 and 85 miles an hour. There was a lot of debris. There was the loss of electricity as it went over Miami, Dade County. Then, of course, when it got out to the gulf, fueled by those warm waters, about 87 degrees, providing the fuel for the hurricane, it surged in intensity on up to category 5, coming down to a category 4 before it hit the Louisiana coast.

It is eerily similar; Hurricane Rita springing up and hitting Florida this time actually 50 miles south of Key West, of course, with those counterclockwise winds, and a category 1 hitting Key West—that being the strongest side of the storm—and then out over the warm waters of the gulf. This is what we have as it is approaching landfall Saturday morning.

Before Katrina, this Nation was finally waking up to how vulnerable we are in our dependence on energy sources. Specifically, the Nation was waking up to the fact that 58 percent of our daily consumption of oil comes

from foreign shores. That is not a very good position to be in if you have to depend on foreign lands for that oil. The price of gasoline was spiking up prior to Katrina, in the range of \$2.70 a gallon. This was during August. I was doing townhall meetings all over my State of Florida, and I can tell you at \$2.70 a gallon, people are hurting. Senior citizens on fixed incomes cannot afford to drive to the doctor. People making \$20,000 a year can't afford to drive to work.

Then along comes Katrina, and because of hitting the area of our refinery capacity, the scare goes into the market and the price of gasoline surges. In one station, overnight—one station on Interstate 10 near Tallahassee—it surged 40 cents to well over \$3 a gallon.

I can tell you because I know what my people feel in Florida, they are hurting. They are having difficulty making ends meet, even without now having this additional cost. Here we go again. Here comes the next major hurricane, Hurricane Rita. It is now apparently bearing down on the Galveston-Houston area, one of the major shipping ports of the world. Also, that is where a great deal of the oil activity and the oil refinery capacity of this country is located. If it does knock out some of that refinery capacity, we are going to see these spikes in the price of gasoline to the point that it is starting to hurt our people.

Is it going to take another tragedy like this for us to finally wake up and, as a nation, get our heads out of the sand and address this energy-dependent condition in which we find ourselves? Mind you, this is with the backdrop that over the past 4-plus years I have been privileged to be a Member of the Senate, we have tried almost every year to do a simple little thing, and that is to raise miles per gallon on SUVs and phase it in over a long period of time so it doesn't hurt anybody. But we cannot even get 40 votes out of 100 Senators for an amendment like that, to try to address the energy-dependent condition in which this Nation finds itself.

What are we going to do? Is it going to take another Katrina-like tragedy to shake us out of our lethargy? We might be shaken come next Saturday morning.

There are a number of things we can do. But before I go into that, let me tell you about this thin thread we are hanging onto in our energy dependence. With 58 percent of our daily consumption foreign oil, any disruption in the system automatically will cause prices to spike and could come to the position of paralysis. It could be a major shutdown because of some malfunction in a refinery. Lord forbid, it could be a terrorist sinking a supertanker in the Strait of Hormuz, that 19-mile-wide strait in the Persian Gulf through which all of the world's tankers have to go out into the open sea to supply a world thirsty for oil. It could

be another series of hurricanes. Whatever it is, that thin thread of the supply line could have devastating consequences for this country, if we cannot satiate our parched throats, this thirst for oil.

We best get on with it. I suggest we start rethinking and get more than 39 votes for mandating increased miles per gallon. I suggest we start making ethanol, not just from corn—which is an expensive process—but from less expensive sources from which our technology now allows us to make ethanol. We can surely make it from sugar cane. We can make a lot from normal waste. Do you know something else. We can make it from grass. We have 31 million acres of prairie grass in this country. Let's cut the grass. Let's make cheaper ethanol and let's mix that ethanol with gasoline that will burn in our existing car engines.

The primary consumption of oil is in the transportation sector, and in the transportation sector are our personal vehicles, where we consume most of that oil. If we start mixing ethanol with gasoline in greater proportions, it will burn in our existing car engines and we will use that much less oil.

But let's do something else. Let's make sure that when the car manufacturers are satisfying the demands of the American public for new automobiles, they satisfy the demands and start producing more hybrid vehicles. If you have a hybrid vehicle, which Toyota has had for the last 6 years, that will get the equivalent of 50 miles per gallon in start/stop traffic, then you are burning less oil. The consumption of oil is less.

If that hybrid vehicle is now burning a fuel that is not just gasoline but is a mixture of gasoline and ethanol, then you are consuming all the less oil.

I suggest one more thing, that we build our hybrid vehicles so that when you park in your garage at night, you plug it in and it charges up that battery, so the next day, when you drive out, you have a fully charged battery so the gasoline engine in your hybrid vehicle is being used less to charge up that battery, and you have charged up that battery overnight from a source of energy other than oil.

These are steps we can take right now. How many more monster hurricanes is it going to take, hitting the refinery capacity of this Nation along the gulf coast, for us to get our heads out of the sand? I hope and pray that Rita is going to lessen and that it will not strike a portion of the coast that brings devastation and tumult and hardship. But as of Thursday midday, that is the course it is on for Saturday morning landfall. The National Hurricane Center is pretty accurate in their predictions.

I am talking to an empty Chamber because we are all out there in committee meetings. I have just run here from trying to help protect us in the Commerce Committee on a question of communications after a natural disaster—which we have experienced after

Katrina. The Judiciary Committee is meeting at this moment as they consider a nominee for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

I have made similar remarks on this floor time and time again. If they have not fallen on deaf ears, they have been ignored, as have the similar remarks of other Senators. How many times do we have to be reminded of our vulnerability as a nation, dependent on foreign oil? Let's start enacting some energy policies that will address this problem immediately, to wean ourselves as quickly as possible from dependence on foreign oil.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. 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.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2528, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2528) making appropriations for military quality of life functions of the Department of Defense, military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Appropriations, with an amendment.

(Strike the part shown in black brackets and insert the part shown in italic.)

H.R. 2528

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 military quality of life functions of the Department of Defense, military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Army as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Army Corps of Engineers and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, and for construction and operation of facilities in support of the functions of the Commander in Chief, \$1,602,552,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed \$168,804,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, architect and engineer services, and host nation

support, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

In addition, \$50,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2007, for overhead cover systems to support force protection activities in Iraq: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, such funds may be obligated or expended to carry out planning and design and military construction projects not otherwise authorized by law.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, naval installations, facilities, and real property for the Navy and Marine Corps as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, \$1,109,177,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed \$36,029,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Air Force as currently authorized by law, \$1,171,338,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed \$91,733,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, installations, facilities, and real property for activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments), as currently authorized by law, \$976,664,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010: *Provided*, That such amounts of this appropriation as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to such appropriations of the Department of Defense available for military construction or family housing as the Secretary may designate, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes, and for the same time period, as the appropriation or fund to which transferred: *Provided further*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed \$107,285,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities

for the training and administration of the Army National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$410,624,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$225,727,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$138,425,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVAL RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$45,226,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air Force Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$110,847,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION SECURITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For the United States share of the cost of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program for the acquisition and construction of military facilities and installations (including international military headquarters) and for related expenses for the collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Area as authorized by section 2806 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$206,858,000, to remain available until expended.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, \$549,636,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, \$803,993,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, \$218,942,000, to remain available until September 30, 2010.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for operation and