

Connecticut, as you know, contains a number of major highways, a nuclear power facility, ports that are home to a regional depot for the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, shipyards, cargo operations and passenger and auto ferries.

The funding contained within the Conference Report is utterly insufficient to support the actions needed to protect the people of our state, to say nothing of the millions of travelers and tons of truck, train and barge cargo that pass through Connecticut every year.

I am urging you to seek an increase in the funding for Connecticut. We cannot sustain a two-thirds reduction in federal homeland security funding. It is unfair and unwise.

I will be contacting you shortly to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

M. JODI RELL,
Governor.

RELIEF FOR GULF COAST STATES

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I will not take as much time as others have, but I would like to commend my colleague from Louisiana, Senator LANDRIEU, for her Herculean efforts over the last couple of days to try and convince this body to do everything it can to provide the needed relief for thousands of displaced individuals along the Gulf Coast, including, obviously, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and parts of Texas.

I am really stunned, in a sense, by the response we are providing to this situation so far.

On average we provide \$5 billion a week to fund our ongoing efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obviously, this funding is critical to protect our troops and the work they continue to undertake overseas. When the President has been asked how he plans to pay for these ongoing efforts, he says that he plans to pay for them using additional Federal resources that are not taken out of other Federal spending priorities.

And yet when it comes to providing the necessary relief to our own citizens in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, we are being told by the President that we absolutely have to use existing Federal resources to pay for recovery and relief efforts. We are being told that Federal resources cannot be provided unless we reduce other Federal spending priorities.

I can understand the frustration of the Senator from Louisiana. She goes every week to community after community in her State and still sees the horrible circumstances under which thousands of people are living. Meanwhile, the Senate is about to take another week off. As literally hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens are suffering, we are leaving town instead of working together to provide adequate long-term disaster assistance in areas such as public health, education, housing, transportation and homeland security.

The Senator from Louisiana took the floor over an extended period of time to talk about the importance of providing

this relief: to care for the thousands of displaced children, to assist people who lost their homes, their businesses, their very livelihoods. Nevertheless, we are told by this administration and the leadership in Congress that no adequate assistance can be provided unless we cut vital spending elsewhere.

If we do not have to find offsets for rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan, then why do we have to find offsets to rebuild the Gulf Coast—our own soil? If this catastrophe were to happen in my State of Connecticut or anywhere else, we would all appreciate what our colleague from Louisiana has gone through and express our frustrations in the same way she has.

So I join with Senator LANDRIEU and others who have already spoken. I am also waiting to hear about what offsets we are going to be forced to come up with to pay for the recovery and relief efforts along the Gulf Coast. They will most certainly come from domestic investments such as Medicaid that aid the poor, not from repealing the estate tax or other tax cuts that have aided only the wealthiest of Americans.

I imagine that we will cut spending to services provided under Medicare and Medicaid—services that provide basic health care coverage to the poorest of our citizens who are the most dependent for their health care needs. There is a very sad irony to this. We are going to force the poor to bear the greatest burden on funding recovery and relief efforts along the Gulf Coast. In essence we are going to charge them to pay for this. What kind of logic is that? It is irrational, it is wrong, and we ought to be doing better by the people of our own country.

I am disappointed that this body had to rush out of town and could not spend the additional time necessary to get this right for the people of the Gulf Coast.

So I, again, applaud the Senator from Louisiana. I admire her courage. I certainly admire her tenacity in fighting as hard as she has been for the people of her State.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

IRAQ ELECTIONS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on October 15, one week from tomorrow, the Iraqi people will cast their votes on a new, permanent Iraqi constitution, a social compact, which if ratified, will be unique in the history of the Arab Middle East.

Since the stunning January 30 elections, Iraqi leaders have worked tirelessly to draft this historic document.

Next Saturday, the Iraqi people will have the chance to formally express their support for this historic document.

Throughout the summer, we witnessed the complex and painstaking nature of the constitution drafting process. These negotiations included leaders from all of Iraq's ethnic and religious groups. The product is a result of patience, flexibility, and compromise.

As the President said yesterday in his televised speech, "By any standard or precedent of history, Iraq has made incredible political progress—from tyranny, to liberation, to national elections, to the writing of a constitution, in the space of 2½ years."

Indeed.

And they have made this progress under a hail of constant threats and violence from terrorist enemies within and without their borders.

American service men and women have sacrificed greatly to advance America's interests in Iraq, but many more Iraqis have been killed and injured in the pursuit of a free and democratic Iraq.

The draft permanent constitution lays a solid foundation for a stable and democratic Iraq in the heart of the Middle East. It establishes a true democratic system. The voice of all Iraqis will be heard. Human rights will be protected. The rule of law will be respected. And women will be full and equal participants.

It is critical that Iraqis from all walks of life and all segments of Iraq's diverse population participate in next week's referendum.

It is also important for Iraq's Sunni population to support this document and the democratic system of government that it establishes.

Sunni leaders have expressed strong reservations about several aspects of the constitution in recent weeks. Many will vote no; that is their right.

However, I believe that they also recognize the importance of participating in the referendum. Only through participation and integration into Iraq's new democratic system can Iraq's ethnic and religious groups ensure that their rights are secured and their interests are protected. They learned this hard lesson after avoiding the January vote. They will not make the same mistake again.

When several of my Senate colleagues and I met with Interim President Jalal Talabani last month, I was convinced that the Iraqi people recognize the magnitude of this moment.

And I am confident that when the time comes next week, they will once again show their courage and determination.

The enemy will try to intimidate and threaten them. But the Iraqi people are strong.

Eight and one-half million voters defied the killers last January, and Iraqis continue to volunteer for the Iraqi security forces, ready and willing to defend their new democracy. They do so