

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### NOMINATION OF BERTHA K. MADRAS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have notified Senate leadership of my intent to object to any unanimous consent request relating to the nomination of Bertha K. Madras to the position of Deputy Director for Demand Reduction. This action has nothing to do with Ms. Madras or her qualifications for the position to which she has been nominated. I have taken this action because there are a number of outstanding issues regarding the activities and operation of the Office of National Drug Control Policy that should be resolved before considering this nomination. I am hopeful that, with the cooperation of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, these issues can be resolved shortly.

#### ELECTION ASSISTANCE FOR STATES IMPACTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, Congress has taken great efforts to address the disruption that Hurricane Katrina, followed by Hurricane Rita, have inflicted on the good people of our gulf coast region. While Congress is acutely aware of the need for funding for food, clothing, shelter and medical care for the evacuees and residents of this region, we are only now becoming aware of some of the longer term needs of these devastated communities.

All of the States impacted by these hurricanes, including not just those directly hit by the storms but also the numerous States which have come to the aid of evacuees will be holding Federal elections in just a few short months. The displacement of nearly 1.5 million people raises a somewhat unique continuity of government issue for our democracy: how to ensure that the citizens of these States are able to participate in the upcoming Federal elections next year, as well as in numerous State and local elections between now and then. It is simply not acceptable that a loss of one's home may mean a loss of one's access to the ballot box. And yet, many of these States are facing unknown hurdles in

ensuring that their displaced residents can vote in the next Federal election.

The Rules Committee, under the very capable leadership of the Chairman, Senator LOTT, has already begun meeting with the election officials of these affected States to determine what they will need to ensure that all eligible citizens will be able to participate in the 2006 Federal elections, regardless of the condition of their community or the location of their evacuated citizens. Under the auspices of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, efforts are underway to identify Federal resources and assistance that is already available to the States to replace voting systems, polling places, and to assist in facilitating absentee voting.

However, at this point, many of these impacted States simply do not know the extent of the damage to election records or how to reach out to displaced citizens to ensure that they have access to absentee ballots or alternative polling facilities. While we are hopeful that the majority of the needs will be met through existing resources, I remain concerned that these States, and those who have stepped up to the plate to receive evacuees, will face additional expenses in ensuring the right to vote for the citizens of the gulf coast region.

The Election Assistance Commission, EAC, is charged with serving as a national clearinghouse and resource of information and procedures with respect to the administration of Federal elections and with distributing over \$3 billion in Federal funds to the States to implement the requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, HAVA, of which I was honored to be the primary Senate author. I applaud the efforts of the EAC to spearhead the efforts to identify and respond to the needs of these States in administering our Federal elections next year. However, I remain concerned that without additional resources, these States will face significant hurdles to ensuring that all eligible citizens have an equal opportunity to vote and have their vote counted.

While Congress has appropriated over \$3 billion to date to implement the requirements of the Help America Vote Act, Congress has underfunded the authorization by over \$800 million. At least one of the impacted States has already notified staff that they are short in funding to implement the HAVA requirements and face additional unmet need due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina.

While I am hopeful that sufficient other Federal resources will be identified and made available to these States for conducting the Federal elections next year, it will not be acceptable if citizens of the Gulf Coast States are disenfranchised because their States and localities simply do not have the resources to replace destroyed voting systems, provide alternative polling places, print absentee ballots or reconstruct lost voting registration records.

As the ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee which has oversight jurisdiction over Federal elections, I intend to ensure that these States, and these citizens, are able to fully participate in the Federal election next year. Our distinguished Chairman, Senator LOTT, whose State was in the path of both hurricanes, is keenly aware of this situation and I commend him for his leadership and attention to this issue. I know he shares my concern that as we learn the full extent of this problem, the Committee will act to ensure these communities and citizens can exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Mr. LOTT. First of all, I want to thank my good friend the senior Senator from Connecticut and ranking member of the Rules Committee, which I chair, for participating in this important discussion about the election-related challenges that the Gulf Coast States face in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. While the full extent of the damage to the election infrastructure cannot yet be precisely quantified, we know it was wide-ranging. For example, in my home county, Jackson County, MS, it appears that hundreds of voting booths and large amounts of voting equipment were destroyed as was the building that houses the county election commission. In neighboring Harrison County, we understand that all the polling places located near the coast were leveled. And in Hancock County, MS, all of the voting machines were destroyed and nearly every polling place was either completely flattened or otherwise rendered uninhabitable.

We have heard similar reports from the state of Louisiana. According to state election officials, early estimates are that the State lost over 500 polling places and over 2,000 voting machines, with some parishes reporting that all of their voting equipment was destroyed. Thus, it is clear that a major commitment of resources will be needed to rebuild polling places and replace voting machines that were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

But restoring damaged election infrastructure in the areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina is not the only election-related challenge to be surmounted. Hundreds of thousands of citizens in Louisiana and Mississippi had to be relocated as a result of Hurricane Katrina, in many instances to other States. Large numbers of these evacuees will not be able to return to their home communities in the immediate future. For these citizens, casting absentee ballots will be the primary, if not only, method by which they will be able to be fully able to participate in upcoming elections that will affect the rebuilding efforts in their communities. Consequently, the demand for absentee ballots in the impacted areas will increase by many orders of magnitude during the coming months. We are already learning that additional workers may need to be hired to handle

the increased number of absentee ballot requests that are anticipated. So, as we can plainly see, election officials in jurisdictions impacted by Hurricane Katrina will face numerous logistical challenges as they prepare to conduct upcoming elections.

We understand that FEMA, under its Public Assistance Program, is obligated to cover the expenses for replacing damaged voting equipment and restoring destroyed polling places in jurisdictions that have been designated Federal disaster areas. And for jurisdictions with upcoming elections but whose permanent polling places are currently uninhabitable, FEMA has a responsibility to pay the costs for setting up temporary polling places such as tents or trailers. The funding provided by FEMA, if it is disbursed in a timely manner, should go a long way towards restoring the election infrastructure in areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. It remains to be seen, however, whether such monies will be sufficient to bolster all aspects of the voting systems that were affected by the recent catastrophe.

As Chairman of the committee with jurisdiction over the administration of Federal elections in our country, I along with the ranking member, Senator DODD, will continue to vigilantly monitor the situation in the states impacted by Hurricane Katrina to ensure they are receiving the resources they need to fully restore their election infrastructure to pre-Katrina levels. As more information becomes available, we will assess whether additional funds may need to be appropriated to assist the impacted jurisdictions in reconstituting their election systems. We will also make sure FEMA follows through on its commitments and responsibilities.

In conclusion, the right to vote in the impacted regions of the Gulf Coast must not become a further casualty of Hurricane Katrina. We must work to ensure that it does not. Essential election infrastructure will need to be restored. And those who had to be evacuated as a result of Hurricane Katrina and who continue to be displaced from their homes must be afforded the full opportunity to participate in the democratic process in their home communities.

I again want to thank my friend Senator DODD for his leadership on the issue of election reform and look forward to continuing to work with him on this important matter.

Mr. DODD. I thank our Chairman, and my good friend, and commend him for his leadership on this issue. I look forward to working with him to ensure that, no matter the devastation of this natural disaster, all eligible citizens will be able to continue to participate in this democracy through the ballot box.

#### BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, this month we observe National Breast Can-

cer Awareness Month, and reflect on a disease that has touched countless American lives. There are more than 3 million women living with breast cancer in the United States and tens of thousands of women die from breast cancer each year. Breast cancer is now the second leading cause of cancer deaths in American women. While important advances have been made, the causes of this disease and the means to prevent it are still unknown.

Scientific evidence about what aspects of the environment play a role in the initiation and development of breast cancer also remains scarce. Although it is generally believed that there is a correlation between environmental factors and the prevalence of breast cancer, the extent of the environment's role is not well understood. Given the clear need to explore the potential relationship between the environment and breast cancer, I have introduced S. 757, the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act. This bill would authorize \$30 million per year for 5 years for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIEHS, to award grants to study the relationship between environmental factors and breast cancer. Under a competitive, peer-reviewed grant making process, the Director of NIEHS would award grants for the development and operation of up to eight centers for the purpose of conducting multidisciplinary research. The bill would seek to foster community collaboration between the research centers, patients, and the patient advocacy organizations.

The targeted research proposed in S. 757 holds the promise for a better understanding of the causes of breast cancer, breakthroughs in prevention and treatment, and ultimately a cure. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring S. 757 so that we may work together toward Senate passage this year.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STEVEN A. VALDEZ

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I honor the life of a young Arkansan who, in the name of freedom, paid the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the Nation he loved. Steven A. Valdez was a brave soldier who died a hero in a foreign land, but he was also a caring young man who deeply loved his family and friends and they were never far from his mind.

Those who knew Lance Corporal Valdez from his childhood in McRea, a small north-central Arkansas town, remember him as competitive, energetic and fun loving. He graduated from Beebe High School in 2004 and, soon after, followed the footsteps of his older brother Glenn Skaggs, and his grandfather Billy Skaggs, into the United States Marine Corps.

In November of 2004, LCpl Valdez reported to the Marine Corps Base at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Serving with the

2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, he was deployed to Afghanistan in June as a machine gun operator with Weapons Platoon Company E. Within the year, his family received a letter from the Marines, which cited Valdez's promotion to Lance Corporal and praised him for going above and beyond what was asked or expected of him. While serving in Afghanistan, LCpl Valdez was stationed at Camp Blessing. The camp is located in eastern Afghanistan, in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains near the Pakistani border, and serves as a forward operating base for intelligence and military operations aimed to train Afghan security forces and track down al-Qaeda terrorists. He served with a platoon of Marines guarding the camp.

While serving in Afghanistan, LCpl Valdez and his grandfather, Billy, had an agreement; Billy would send care packages with his grandson's favorite snacks and items from home, but he would also include phone cards with the expectation that the young marine would call his grandfather once a week. For LCpl Valdez, it was a much needed respite from the stresses of war that allowed him to feel a little closer to home; for Billy, it was reassuring to hear his grandson's voice and to know that he was safe and healthy.

On September 26, insurgents attacked Camp Blessing with mortar, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. LCpl Valdez was struck by shrapnel from a mortar while running to his machine gun post. The brave 20-year-old died shortly after.

In remembering their loved one, LCpl Valdez's proud grandfather speaks of him as a "true hero." When his brother, Sergeant Glenn Skaggs, returns to Iraq, he will be concerned about his own well-being, but only in the sense that he doesn't want to put his family through another grieving process. Despite these concerns, in a manner typical of this courageous and selfless family, he proudly states "My brother was over there for something he believed in, and I want to help finish it."

Although Steven Valdez may no longer be with us, his legacy and his spirit will forever live on in our hearts. On behalf of a grateful Nation, my thoughts and prayers go out his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate