about one-sixth of households across the country that actually can qualify for the assistance. So this is a perennial fight we wage even when prices aren't as high as today. And now, that battle becomes all the more pivotal.

I Thank Senators REED and COLLINS for their leadership on this motion to instruct the conferees for increased LIHEAP funding, and I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them to secure what is, in essence, literally life-or-death funding for our most vulnerable Americans. The cold weather won't wait—and neither should we when it comes to helping citizens survive through the coming winter.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, let's remember what this amendment does in the context of the LIHEAP issue. This amendment will add $2.9 billion to the national debt and pass that debt on to our children in order to pay for energy costs which are being incurred today.

The correct way to do this is the way we proposed in the Senate, as Republicans, which is to pay for it. That is what we will do in the conference. There is already $1 billion additional money for LIHEAP in the conference, and it will probably go up. The difference between those dollars and what is being proposed in this amendment is we actually pay for it.

It is inappropriate to go to this number, which is a 130-percent increase in the LIHEAP program, when spending on oil is estimated to go up by 28 to 30 percent or maybe even 40 percent. Increasing the program by 130 percent when the oil costs are going up 30 to 40 percent is inconsistent on its face.

It is especially inconsistent when one is taking that bill and giving it to one's children and their children's children so they end up paying for today's oil costs rather than their oil costs 2 or 3 years from today or two or three generations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SANTORUM), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) would vote ''aye.''

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

The result was announced—yeas 63, nays 28, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 357 Leg.]

YEAS—63

Akaka	Feingold	Murray
Baucus	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Grassley	Obama
Bingaman	Harkin	Pryor
Burns	Inouye	Reed
Burr	Jeffords	Reid
Byrd	Johnson	Rockefeller
Carper	Kennedy	Salazar
Chafee	Kerry	Sarbanes
Clinton	Kohl	Schumer
Coleman	Landrieu	Smith
Collins	Lautenberg	Snowe
Conrad	Leahy	Specter
Corzine	Levin	Stabenow
Crapo	Lieberman	Stevens
Dayton	Lincoln	Sununu
DeWine	Lugar	Talent
Dole	Martinez	Thune
Domenici	McCain	Voinovich
Dorgan	Mikulski	Warner
Durbin	Murkowski	Wyden

NAYS—28

Alexander	Craig	Kyl
Allard	DeMint	Lott
Allen	Ensign	McConnell
Bennett	Enzi	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Frist	Roberts
Brownback	Gregg	Sessions
Bunning	Hagel	Shelby
Coburn	Hatch	Thomas
Cochran	Hutchison	
Cornyn	Inhofe	

NOT VOTING—9

Biden	Chambliss	Isakson
Boxer	Dodd	Santorum
Cantwell	Graham	Vitter

The motion was agreed to.

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I regret that I was unable to vote this afternoon on the Reed motion to instruct conferees with respect to S. 1932, the deficit reduction bill.

The LIHEAP program is of critical importance to Pennsylvania. My State routinely faces very harsh winters. Now that the cold weather is here and bills must be paid, I believe we must act to provide additional funding for this program. My record shows that I have been a consistent LIHEAP supporter, and I am hopeful that an increase will be promptly approved.

Mr. President, I ask that the RECORD reflect that, had I been here, I would have voted in favor of Senator REED's motion to instruct.●

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER.

Under the previous order, the Presiding Officer appoints Mr. GREGG, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. ENZI, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CONRAD, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. LEAHY conferees on the part of the Senate.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Massachusetts be recognized at this point for 10 minutes, and after the Senator from Massachusetts has completed his time, the majority leader be recognized.

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New Hampshire.

SBA RESPONSE TO HURRICANES IN GULF STATES

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, obviously somewhere in the next few days—we don't know when yet—we are going to be wrapping up our business here, and that will mark the end of the first session of the 109th Congress. Before we leave, Members on both sides of the aisle are very concerned that we will not have provided the assistance to the small businesses in the Gulf States region that they desperately need in order to recover from the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The effect is that literally hundreds of thousands of small businesses are in desperate need of assistance throughout that region. Without the jobs those small businesses provide, the economy of the gulf coast is going to have a much harder time coming back.

Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the gulf coast, regrettably—this has been commented on again by Senators on both sides of the aisle; it is not a partisan issue—there has been a stunningly slow response by the Administration to provide relief to small businesses.

The administration has now sent up three pieces of emergency legislation—three supplemental emergency spending bills worth more than $62 billion—and yet we have not adopted any direct relief for small businesses.

The latest supplemental request asks for $471 million in additional funding for SBA disaster loans and the SBA Inspector General. But, frankly, giving more money to the disaster loan program doesn't address small business needs. It's too narrow in scope and is not delivering relief with urgency.

Senator LOTT has talked about the problems—Senator COCHRAN has too—and there is a recognition that you have a lot of small businesses that can't wait till their disaster loans are processed or disbursed. They need access to capital immediately.

It is a matter of record now, commented on in many national journals, that the SBA has done a completely inadequate job—abysmal may be a better word—of getting disaster loan funds into the hands of small businesses in the gulf region.

It is not because of the lack of funds or the lack of employees. The SBA has enough funding to grant $1.4 billion in disaster loans, and $249 million for administration and staff. The staffing has been increased from some 800 employees to 4,000 employees.

As of Monday of this week, almost 39,000 small businesses had applied for

SBA disaster loans. Yet with all of these resources, both personnel and money, only 9,200 loans have been actually processed, which is 25 percent, and only 2,600, which is 7 percent, had actually been approved. Only 240 had actually seen a disbursement of money.

In addition, as of last week, the SBA had handed out only 10 of its new gulf opportunity loans the administration's answer to the business community's call for bridge loans.

We were assured by the SBA Administrator several weeks ago in a bipartisan committee hearing that those loans were on track, that they would respond rapidly, that they had enough people in place, that they were going to get the money out, and, indeed, here we are with the same record that was the incentive to have that hearing in the first place.

These loans, I might add, have an interest rate of as much as 13.5 percent. Why would we be providing a 13.5 percent loan to people who have been hit when you are trying to do it as a matter of disaster response? Frankly, that is beyond me.

The program has generated irate complaints from the very people whom it has been set up to try to help. One small business owner who called my office referred to the SBA and FEMA as ''blackwater mercenaries.'' They feel set upon, not helped. We are not going to help the small businesses down there until we pass comprehensive small business assistance.

Senators LOTT and COCHRAN have stated that the pace of reconstruction in their home State of Mississippi and the other Gulf States is ''unacceptable.''

Despite the assertion of the administration that the Nation's ''small business sector is vibrant,'' Senator LOTT has said that the slow pace of approving disaster loans ''is preventing small businesses from coming back and jobs from returning or being created. Not unexpectedly, the unemployment rates in the two largest coastal counties, Harrison and Jackson, are more than quadruple the national average.''

Senator LOTT is absolutely correct, and we need to do something about it.

So far, the best efforts of the Senate have been stymied. One bill passed 96–0 in the Senate during consideration of CJS. That was dropped in conference. Another bipartisan bill, S. 1807, the Small Business Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction Act, has been blocked by the White House since September 30. That is almost 2½ months.

Small business owners such as Dr. Edward Lang and Dr. Angela Lang, who rushed to complete their disaster loan application in the weeks following the hurricane, believing that assistance was going to be there, have been told that everything was going to be done to help people recover. They have gone months now without hearing any response from the SBA whatsoever.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, their small but successful podiatry office based out of New Orleans was deluged with 5 feet of water.

With their savings all but gone, and the ever-shrinking list of patients, all of whom have been displaced by the storm, the Langs are in dire need of assistance. They want to stay there. They want to rebuild their business there. It is essential to New Orleans that people who make that choice are empowered to be able to do so.

Despite repeated offers from out-of-state hospitals, they are sticking by their plan to try to rebuild in the city they love and the place they want to work. But the cold shoulder they received from the SBA is a virtual death sentence for their livelihood. They are just one example of countless other gulf coast businesses that have been ignored by the very governmental agencies that exist to serve them. On its face, that is unacceptable.

The request that has been put forward by the Small Business Committee for $720 million is a little more than 1 percent of the $62 billion the administration has requested for Katrina relief. This legislation is a very small cost compared to the total amount of money the Government is putting in, but an enormous return for the small businesses that need it.

Once again, we are seeing a situation where big business is able to walk away with most of the funding while the vast majority of the job base is in small business, and they are not getting the assistance they need.

What our bill does is to authorize $450 million for the impacted States to provide immediate assistance to small businesses struggling to get on their feet. It authorizes additional funding for SBA's partners—such as the small business development centers that are out in the field trying to provide business counseling to the many people and to the owners who are trying to determine what comes next.

There are too many businesses on the verge of bankruptcy in the hurricanes' wake. Since the goal shared in a bipartisan way by all of the Senate and the House is to try to get those businesses to be leveraged as best as possible, to be able to return as soon as possible, and each small business that returns helps the other small businesses to be able to return, all of those things will make a difference. Tax breaks will help. But the fact is, tax breaks are not enough because tax breaks do not make an impact until you file your taxes. They have nothing to do with the assistance one needs now to be able to have cash in the pocket, to be able to survive the gap. Small businesses need that additional relief, access to capital, immediate and longer-term.

Our bill also addresses the Administration's failure to contract with small businesses to rebuild the region. The New York Times reported more than 80 percent of FEMA contracts alone were awarded on the no-bid limited competition basis. This bill we have introduced—Senator SNOWE, myself, and other members of the committee—encourages greater competition by implementing a 30-percent goal for prime contracts and a 40-percent subcontracting goal. With billions of dollars being allocated to relief and reconstruction, it is important to demand fair competition. We need to ensure that America's small businesses are not left behind.

The citizens of the gulf region are courageously and desperately trying to rebuild their communities. The empty promises of several weeks ago, ''we will do what it takes, we will stay as long as it takes,'' are ringing in their ears. Frankly, they are wondering where the actions are to back that up.

According to Mike Allen of Time magazine, one Presidential adviser is quoted as saying recently:

> Katrina has fallen so far off the radar screen you can't even find it.

We need to find it. We need to put small businesses back on the radar screen. We need to follow through on the commitments to the victims of these devastating hurricanes. We need to ensure that we do not leave the citizens of the Gulf States behind.

There is bipartisan support to do this. The Senate passed this legislation previously. My hope is before we decide to go home, we will do what is necessary for the citizens who have been so badly impacted in the Gulf State region get the relief they have told us they need.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2520

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, over the next few moments I will be addressing an issue that affects potentially thousands of people today who are without therapy or who have debilitating diseases, and then begin a brief discussion on what is called the cord blood bill.

The bill, broadly supported in a bipartisan way, has widespread support in the Senate, as well as in the House of Representatives.

As my colleagues know, we plan to take up and debate the policy and issues related to Federal support and oversight for embryonic stem cell research early next year.

And I look forward to what I know will be a full debate on the science and ethics surrounding this important research.

Today, I ask consent to move forward with bipartisan legislation to encourage a technology that is producing cures and saving lives now.

This legislation is needed now.

Every day, patients young and old die waiting for transplants of hematopoetic cells because they can't find a suitable match.

Diseases like leukemia, sickle cell anemia, and as many as 70 other blood and genetic diseases have been helped or cured by Cord blood transplants.