

We came into session at 2:15, I believe, and we essentially are doing nothing. So someone watching these proceedings might want to ask the question: If you are not doing anything, why aren't you doing something? Are you not doing anything because there is nothing to do?

That is not the case. We are not doing anything, despite the fact that there are things to be done, because people object to doing things. That is a strange situation. What should be done? The Agriculture appropriations bill should be brought to the floor. That was the intention yesterday.

That bill is one I worked on last spring. I am a member of that agriculture appropriations subcommittee. I offered an amendment that my colleague Senator CONRAD and many others worked on on a bipartisan basis. That amendment, dealing with farm disaster aid to farmers, was agreed to. It went through the entire process. But the bill has not been brought to the floor. It needs to be modified now because we have had a devastating drought in the middle of 2006. My colleague would modify, with his amendment, the original amendment and provide the disaster aid we want to provide to family farmers.

This is not some notion out of left field. It is what this country has always done. If you have a devastating drought—and tens of thousands of farmers have seen their crops dry up in the field, and they have lost everything—the Congress has always said: We want to help you.

It is interesting to me that we go all over the world helping. I am proud that our country is there to say we want to help. But what about here at home, in the middle of our country, in the northern Great Plains in North Dakota, where farmers and ranchers had to sell their entire herds because there was nothing to eat? You cannot run a farm and you cannot keep a cow if you don't have feed. What about those folks who lost everything? Do we want to help them? I think so. It is what we have always done. But we have been blocked from bringing it to the floor of the Senate. We have things to do right now, and yet we are doing nothing because we have people blocking the attempt to bring up legislation we should be working on.

So my colleague, Senator CONRAD, asked unanimous consent to go to the Agriculture appropriations bill, which we thought we were going to as of yesterday, and we believed that was the intent. If we cannot reach an agreement on that, let me ask consent of a different nature. My understanding today was they could not go to the Agriculture appropriations bill, or would not, or whatever, and they wanted to go to the India nuclear agreement.

Let me ask this: I ask unanimous consent that the Senate immediately proceed to the Agriculture appropriations bill pending the disposition of the Indian nuclear agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator, I object.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the point is to say the following: We are not doing anything at this moment. There is much work to be done, some of it very important. We have a lot of farm families wondering: Will we be able to have money to run our farms, for spring planting, or are we going to be told by our bankers and lenders that we cannot continue?

There is an urgency to this. If it cannot be the case that we move to that this afternoon, then OK. If it is the case that there are objections to moving to the Agriculture appropriations bill today and someone says let's bring up the India nuclear deal, the question I raise is, Can we get an agreement following that, so that we have certainty? We are not asking for the Moon here. All we are asking for is certainty to be able to bring to the floor of the Senate and to have a vote on a disaster relief package that is supported by almost three-fourths of the Senate.

My hope is that the majority leader and others will agree with us that we need to find a time. Perhaps the time cannot be today. Can it be at a future date? As my colleague indicated, the Presiding Officer is constrained to object on behalf of the majority leader. I understand that. That may not even be his position. I know he has farmers and agricultural folks in his State as well. My hope is that, with the cooperation of the majority leader, we can lock in a determination of when we have business on the floor of the Senate that will allow Senator CONRAD and I and others to offer the amendment to provide disaster aid. That is what we are asking.

This is not a puzzle for which there is no solution. This is very simple. We just need to understand, will there be an attempt to continue to block this or will there be an obvious opportunity for us to offer the amendment? If there is an opportunity, at that point I think we can lock in a time. My colleague, Senator CONRAD, and I and others would be satisfied with that and we would know we will get to the point to pass this for the farmers in the Senate. That would be an enormous and beneficial thing to do on behalf of thousands of families who work very hard in this country. They get up in the morning and do chores. We don't use the term "do chores" around here. Nobody does chores in the Senate; that is, getting up in the morning, feeding cattle, dealing with the hogs, chickens, and the horses—doing chores. These are people who work very hard. I think it is important for us to recognize that this devastating drought hurt a lot of families very badly. We helped those families as a result of the loss of crops in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I am pleased we did that. We should not limit help in the form of disaster aid to just those folks who lost crops due to a disaster named "Hurricane Katrina." That is the point we are making.

I regret that we have not been able to get consent. My colleague has indicated—and I join him—that he would be constrained to object to moving on other issues until we get an agreement. When we get an agreement on when we are going to be able to vote on this amendment, at that point, then we can move on.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NUTRITION SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6326, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6326) to clarify the provision of nutrition services to older Americans.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 6326) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I have agreed to have these matters resolved because they are urgent matters, and I certainly didn't want to in any way impede action on those items that are absolutely essential.

I would very much like to resolve this matter so that the commitments that were made to me yesterday, both privately and publicly, be kept and we can move on. But I was assured yesterday that if I would take down my amendment, we would then go to the Agriculture appropriations bill today so that the amendment could be offered on that bill, with all Senators' rights reserved.

That was fair. I did it in good faith. But it is not to me good faith to have commitments made and then not kept. So I find myself in the situation where I have no alternative but to object to other business being done until and unless the commitment that was made to

me is kept. That is why we are in this situation. I regret it. I wish we weren't in this situation. But I have been here 20 years, and I have complete respect for other Senators having the right to raise their objections. They can raise rule XVI. We believe our amendment has been drafted in a way that rule XVI will not apply. They can raise a budget point of order. That is completely fair. That is within any Senator's right. I certainly respect that. That would face then a supermajority vote. But we have been trying for months just to get a vote, and I think we have come to the point now where I was assured publicly and privately that it would happen today. That is why I am insisting on that commitment being kept.

I want to say once again, the issue is how we deal with natural disasters. I have proposed that we budget for natural disasters. At least we could look back historically. We know that on average we spend about \$8 billion a year on natural disasters. Perhaps that is what we should do, budget that amount. The problem is, none of us can predict very well what natural disasters are going to occur. Obviously, no one knows when a hurricane is going to hit or a flood or a drought. So historically the approach has been not to budget for natural disasters but to consider them outside of the budget on an emergency basis, and that has been done the entire time I have been in the Senate. I don't necessarily think it is the best way or the only way, but it has been the way. There was no disaster assistance last year. There is no disaster assistance this year for those outside the gulf region. We certainly appreciate that they suffered by far the worst calamity, and I supported generous help to them. But there were others hit by natural disaster as well.

In my State last year, there were 1 million acres prevented from even being planted. Another 600,000 acres were subsequently drowned out, even though they were planted, by the worst flooding we have ever seen. I flew over southeastern North Dakota and it looked like Lake Agassiz, which used to exist thousands of years ago, was reforming. I was on a plane and as far as the eye could see, there was water. I earlier referenced this letter from a young farm family telling me how devastating it was to them that they lost \$120,000 and now this year, the irony of ironies, suffering the worst drought since the 1930s. In fact, the drought monitor, which is the scientific analysis of drought, said the drought that has been suffered in the heartland of the country is the third worst in our Nation's history.

I was on farm after farm that looked like moonscapes. There was nothing growing. Nothing. It was the 4th of July. Corn is supposed to be knee high by the 4th of July. Well, the corn wasn't as high as your shoelaces. I was even on irrigated ground and I saw irrigated corn and the ears hadn't filled out because of the extreme heat. One

day in my hometown of Bismarck, ND, it was 112 degrees. I am not talking about the heat index; I am talking about the actual temperature. This isn't restricted to my home State of North Dakota. South Dakota was even harder hit. The two Senators from that State, a Republican and Democrat, are cosponsors of this legislation. The Senators from Minnesota, a Republican and a Democrat, are cosponsors of this legislation. The Senators from Montana, a Republican and a Democrat, are cosponsors of this legislation. The Senators from Nebraska, a Republican and a Democrat, are cosponsors of this legislation. The Senator from Kansas, Senator ROBERTS from Kansas, the former chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, is a cosponsor of this legislation. Senator HUTCHISON of Texas is a cosponsor of this legislation. All of them have been hit by devastating drought this year.

What does this bill do? It provides bare-bones assistance to these farmers. The cost is \$4.5 billion over 2 years—over 2 years. So it averages about \$2 billion a year. I will just put that in an historic context. In 2000 and 2001, we had disaster assistance bills that cost 1 year over \$11 billion and in another year over \$14 billion. This is a fraction of those. The White House objected to my earlier provisions that included something my southern colleagues asked for—I didn't ask for it, my southern colleagues asked for it—and it passed in the appropriations bill. It was in the previous supplemental that passed the Senate overwhelmingly. But the administration said: No, take that out, because you could be helping somebody not affected by a natural disaster. So we took it out and saved \$1.8 billion. We took out \$250 million of the assistance for small businesses that have been affected. I have spray pilots who have been completely wiped out. They had no business this year. They can't have business when there is no crop to spray. We took that out. We have made adjustment after adjustment to answer the legitimate complaints of colleagues and the administration.

But now we are in a situation where we need to have a vote and have the will of the Chamber expressed. Do they support this or do they not? These farmers deserve at least that. They at least deserve to know: Are they going to have a fair fighting chance for next year?

I would say to those who might be listening: Earlier this year I had 12 independent bankers in my office when the President's chief economic adviser came to see me on another issue. I asked him to step in the conference room to listen for a few moments to these independent bankers from all across every corner of the State of North Dakota, and they told Mr. Hubbard, unless there is assistance forthcoming, there will be a loss of 5 to 10 percent of their clients. They told him that 5 to 10 percent of the farmers and

ranchers in North Dakota will be forced off the land and out of business. They will be done.

That is why Senator DORGAN and I are here with such tenacity, because we are representing the economic lives of tens of thousands of farm families—thousands in North Dakota, but also thousands more in Minnesota, in Montana, in South Dakota, in Nebraska. Our colleagues from those States have come repeatedly to the floor with us to make this point. We have 26 cosponsors of this bill—26—lots of Republicans, lots of Democrats, whose constituents have been similarly devastated by natural disaster. Always in the past there has been a response and, frankly, generally far more generous than this assistance. But these people have not gotten the media attention. It is not like the kind of disaster where the national media focuses, such as a Katrina or Hurricane Rita, or some other devastation. But, in many ways, this is a slow-motion disaster. This is a disaster that unfolded over many days and many weeks and even months no less devastating, but it didn't get the media attention.

I implore my colleagues to give us a chance to vote. That is all we are asking for. We absolutely understand that Senators have a right to vote against it. They have a right to bring a budget point of order. They have a right to raise rule XVI. I don't think it applies here, but they certainly have the right to do it, and to give us a vote. That is what was promised us yesterday. That is why I withdrew the amendment yesterday to let business proceed. But I only did it on the basis that we would be given that opportunity today.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair for listening and I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, first, thanks to my colleague who states well the reasons we are on the floor. I think we have said most of what needs to be said in support of those farm families who have struggled and who have been hit and devastated with something they could not have envisioned: a natural disaster, drought and flood in both cases in our State in successive years.

I mentioned earlier this is not unusual. Traditionally in our country when family farmers have been hit with a tough blow, this country has said: You are not alone. We want to help you. And we have passed some kind of disaster legislation. We have provided some kind of help to those families. They are the ones who live out on the farm alone. It is a tough life.

I was looking back yesterday at 70 years ago in our region, first in South Dakota and next in North Dakota, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt did a train trip and it was a drought tour. On that drought tour he went out to say to people: I want to see what is happening out here and I want to tell you we are going to help. That was 70 years ago. This isn't new. We are not asking for

something that has not been done before. It is something that has always been done.

The President has threatened to veto agricultural disaster aid when it has passed the Senate twice before. There were amendments I added in the Senate Appropriations Committee providing disaster help for farmers. It proceeded through the Senate. It went to conference. I was a conferee. The President threatened the veto and he got the House conferees to resist it and knock it out.

We asked the President to do a drought tour, to go out and see the middle part of the country. Go to the Northern Great Plains, the epicenter of drought, and take a look at ground that is not growing anything. It is just bare ground where crops used to exist. The President was not able to do that.

I want to quote Franklin Delano Roosevelt who 70 years ago on a train did do that drought tour. Here is what he said in Huron, SD, from the back platform of a train. The drought inspection trip was the occasion for Franklin Delano Roosevelt to be on the back platform of a train, speaking to the citizens of Huron, SD, and the family farmers in the surrounding area. He said:

No city in an agricultural country can exist unless the farms are prosperous. We have to cooperate with one another rather than trying to buck one another. I have come out here to find you with your chins up, looking toward the future with confidence and courage. I am grateful for the attitude you are taking out here. As I said, it is a question of working together.

Then he was in Devils Lake, ND, on his train trip. He said:

Today out here I don't ask you to have courage and faith. You have it. You have demonstrated that through a good many years. I am asking, however, that you keep up that courage and especially keep up that faith. If it is possible for government to improve conditions, government will do it.

That is Franklin Delano Roosevelt 70 years ago. He said:

I assure you, the interests of these communities are very close to my heart. I won't forget the day I have spent with you. We hope that nature is going to open up the heavens. When I came out on the platform this morning, I saw a rather dark cloud and I said to myself, Maybe it is going to rain, but it didn't. All I can say is I hope to goodness it is going to rain good and plenty.

He said:

I will tell you, my friends, I am not going to let up until I can give my best service to solving these problems.

Seventy years ago Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a man who knew family farmers, a man who knew America's workers, got on the train and went to take a look at what had happened, at the suffering in the Northern Great Plains as a result of that drought and said: We are going to help.

This is not new. My colleague Senator CONRAD and I are not asking for something that hasn't been done. In fact, in more modern times, the agriculture bill, known as the farm bill,

has always included, until the recent decade or so, a provision called the disaster title that could be triggered when there was a disaster. That is not the case now. So each year we have to come to the Senate to ask for a separate disaster aid package, to try to reach out and help those who otherwise are going to be thrown off the farm and told they can't continue. Is it their fault? No, it is not their fault. Bad managers? No, not bad managers. Spend too much? No. It was a drought that came and destroyed everything they had, and where, in some parts of the country, a flood came and wiped out everything that existed on their farm. It is not their fault. It is the best of this country then to reach out and say: We want to help you. We think you are important to this country.

I mentioned yesterday a fellow named Rodney Nelson from my State who writes prose. He is a cowboy poet. He lives near Almont, ND, and he wrote a piece once that I have not forgotten. He asked in that piece: What is it worth? I think it is important for us to ask the question, What is it worth? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to weld a seam? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to work livestock? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to grease a combine? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to fix a tractor? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to build a lean-to? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to teach a newborn calf how to suck milk out of a bucket? What is all that worth? What is it worth to have a kid who knows how to plow a straight line?

There is only one university in America, only one, where they teach all those skills, and that is the family farm. Some people say it doesn't matter. It does to us. That is why we are here. This is not about a handout. It is about a helping hand during a time of trouble, during a drought and a flood. It is the best of what this country can do, and it is what this country should do. I hope, before this day is out, we will have an agreement by which we will have an opportunity to offer this amendment, get a vote on this amendment, after which clearly it will pass the Senate, and we will be on the way to getting this to the President.

My hope is that the President will not block it. He previously said he would veto legislation such as this, but I think, since he said that, things have changed. My hope is that he will recognize that change.

There has been a lot of discussion about change in this country in recent days, particularly in the last week. Change has a lot of meaning to it. Change is a word that we hope the President will embrace with respect to this issue. Twice previously he has blocked disaster aid for farmers who suffered a disaster as a result of weather-related problems. Twice previously he has blocked it. We hope he recognizes the change necessary to decide

that now we need to help those family farmers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I make a point of order a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we have been talking about these disasters of 2005 and 2006. I thought maybe it would be helpful to show a picture of what we are talking about.

This is last year in North Dakota, the Southeastern part of the State. You can see the massive flooding. There is water everywhere. Only the farmhouse that is surrounded by sandbags is dry—and part of the barn. This was seen all across North Dakota last year.

Now, this year, there is an incredible change. This is what we saw this year. This is the most wicked drought I have ever seen in my life. This is a cornfield in my home county. The corn should have been 2 to 2½ feet high. You can see there is nothing here that is going to produce anything. This gentleman standing there, we asked him to be in the picture to give perspective. It is similar to a moonscape. We saw this all over western South Dakota. Nothing grew.

I told the story earlier of being on a farm south of Bismarck with irrigated corn—160 acres of irrigated corn. We took the ears off the corn and stripped them and about every third row of kernels was gone. There was nothing there.

I said to the farmer: How does this happen with irrigated corn?

He said: Kent, remember, last Sunday alone it was 112 degrees here. It was so hot, so intensely hot, that the kernels couldn't form.

This is the Drought Monitor. This is actually a publication by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that shows the severity of drought. Let me point out this is a scientifically designed survey. It focuses on broad-scale conditions. The yellow is abnormally dry; the tan is drought that is moderate; the darker tan is drought that is severe; the red is drought that is extreme; and the dark brown is drought that is exceptional. Those are the gradations. From abnormally dry in yellow, to light tan, moderate drought, the darker tan severe drought, the red is extreme drought, and the brown is exceptional drought.

Look at my State. North and South Dakota—exceptional drought, extreme drought, severe drought. The whole State in drought.

It was not just North Dakota. You can see Minnesota, a very big swatch here of extreme drought.

Over into Montana. As I said, South Dakota, Nebraska—right down the center of the country, Kansas, over into

Colorado, over into Wyoming, down into Texas and Oklahoma. These are States, all of which have had drought conditions and quite severe drought conditions.

The disaster assistance that we are seeking has been endorsed by all of these farm groups—34 different farm groups saying that we need drought assistance and we need it now, everything from the National Farmers Union to the Barley Growers, the Cotton Council, the Wheat Growers, the Peanut Producers, the Farm Credit Council, the Soybean Growers, the Sheep Industry, the American Farm Bureau—all of them saying:

We urge you to schedule a vote before the October recess on emergency agriculture disaster assistance legislation.

They were asking for it to be done before the October recess. And it is not just the farm groups, but it is also the agriculture commissioners from around the country. Here is what they said in a letter to the Senate back in September:

The State Commissioners, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Directors of Agriculture of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture urge you to support emergency disaster assistance legislation for farmers and ranchers suffering losses and damages in 2005 and 2006.

NASDA believes that emergency agriculture disaster assistance is a high priority requiring action by Congress this year.

This year is swiftly running out. They went on to say:

While there are risk management programs such as crop insurance, disaster loans, and emergency grazing, the relief needed greatly exceeds the levels these programs can provide.

Some of my colleagues have said: Doesn't crop insurance cover this? No, crop insurance doesn't cover it. Why not? Because crop insurance is not designed for repeated loss. It is designed for periodic loss. That is what most insurance is designed for. Fire insurance on your home is not designed to deal with a situation in which your house burns down every year. What we have is a situation in which we have had repeated different disasters—flood last year, drought this year—a bizarre set of circumstances. But crop insurance is not designed for that kind of situation. With crop insurance, what happens when you have repeated disasters, the way the formula works is your coverage level diminishes automatically so that if you have had repeated losses, crop insurance does not provide much assistance. That is the hard reality. That is the way it works.

Some have said: Gee, we ought to fix that. Well, that is a good idea, but that is the way it works right now. So if you do not have a disaster program to offset some of these losses, you wash people right out of business. And that is what is going to happen, not just in my State but right down the center of the country. That is why you see these farm organizations coming forward—those that are Republican oriented, those that are Democratically ori-

ented, unanimously saying this is needed. That is why you hear the agriculture commissioners and the secretaries of agriculture of the States together, in unison: This is needed.

I respect those who say: I am against that. My State is not affected. I will oppose it. They have a right to oppose it. They have a right to come and vote against it. But it seems to me it is only fair that people at least be given a vote. Let's let the body here work its will. If somebody wants to say there is a budget point of order against this, that is fair. You can have a budget point of order and require more than 60 votes to pass. I respect anybody offering that.

I respect somebody saying rule XVI ought to apply. We have been to the Parliamentarian. Rule XVI doesn't apply because this is on an agriculture bill, it is agricultural disaster, so we are told rule XVI does not apply. There are other ways of writing this to further assure rule XVI does not apply.

I say to my colleagues, a commitment was made, publicly and privately, that we are going to go to the agriculture disaster bill today. Today is here. Today is fast fleeting. In fact, as I look out the door there toward the direction of the Supreme Court of the United States, I can see the dusk is falling.

I know the Senate often does its work at night. I have never quite understood that, I say to the occupant of the chair, but for some reason this place often doesn't get around to voting. I think it is because Senators have appointments all afternoon. The reality of the work is they are in committees all morning and they have appointments every 15 minutes or every 30 minutes all afternoon, so by the time they get to come and offer their amendments and offer legislation, it is often in the evening. But the evening is fast approaching, and I hope, I say to my colleagues, I hope we have a chance to vote. Let's give these farm families at least an indication of where they stand. Is there going to be assistance forthcoming or not?

Some have said it is fiscally irresponsible. I understand there is an editorial in the Wall Street Journal, criticizing me, saying I am known as somebody who wants to see a return to fiscal responsibility and yet I am offering this amendment.

That is true. I think one of the greatest threats to this country is the massive debt we are accumulating. I am extremely worried about it. But I also know the Government has an obligation to help those who are affected by natural disasters. This is a very modest package, \$4 billion over 2 years. In 2000 and 2001 we had disaster assistance programs that were approaching more than \$10 billion: \$14.8 billion 1 year and \$11 billion in the next.

This is a very tightly written, constrained disaster relief program in which we have responded to the criticisms leveled by the administration by

taking out those things to which they objected.

I will conclude with this thought.

Agriculture is far under the projections that were made for its costs when the farm bill was written in 2002. Agriculture is below by about \$15 billion what was projected at the time the farm bill was written. Some have said the farm bill was a huge increase over the previous farm bill. No. What they are missing is if you combine the disaster assistance and the farm legislation with previous bills and compare it to what we are doing now, spending is not up; it is down and down significantly.

As I have indicated, we are \$15 billion below what the projections were when the farm bill was written.

That is the circumstance we face.

I have very much riveted in my mind the drought tour we took earlier this year with the leaders of our State going from community to community listening to farm families describe the magnitude of the disaster facing them. I remember being in one farm yard and having one of the most respected farmers in our State take me aside, and say: KENT, this is my last year. I can't continue.

This is a man who has won virtually every farm award in the State of North Dakota. He said to me: You know my family has been on the land for over 100 years in North Dakota. We have a "legacy farm." But we have not had a normal crop in 5 years.

This is in the Red River Valley of North Dakota.

When I grew up, my grandfather would drive through and say: There has never been a crop failure in the Red River Valley. It is the richest farmland in the world outside of the Nile Valley. In the Red River Valley of North Dakota, until the last 6 or 7 years, there has never been a crop failure. We have had the most bizarre set of weather events of my lifetime. We had 18 inches of rain in 24 hours in a town in the Red River Valley, in an area that only gets 18 inches of rain a year. Two years later, they had 14 inches of rain in 24 hours.

We have a lake called Devils Lake that has gone up 26 feet in the last 9 years. This lake is now three times the size of the District of Columbia.

There is something very odd going on. I don't pretend to know what it is. Some say global climate change. Some scientists who have studied it say my part of the country would be most severely affected by a global climate change, that these extremes would be made more extreme. I do not know about that. I do know that in my lifetime I have never seen anything like this.

Can you imagine a lake, a giant lake, going up 26 feet vertically in 9 years? It is an awesome thing to see 18 inches of rainfall in a town in 24 hours where the average rainfall is about that a year.

This is what has been happening. Now this incredible drought which the

Drought Monitor says is the third most extreme drought in the history of the United States. I do not know how they measure drought. I do not know how they make that determination. These are scientific experts. I trust that they know what they are doing.

I say to my colleagues that I have seen firsthand land that looks like a moonscape which would normally be lush.

These people are hanging by a thread. The question is, Do they have the chance to survive until next year or are they done? Many of them are going to be out of business. But many more will be, if there is a failure to act, if there is a failure by Congress to do what it has almost always done in the case of natural disaster, which is to provide disaster relief on an emergency basis.

We don't budget for natural disasters. There is no line item in the budget for natural disaster. Perhaps there should be, but there is none.

I, frankly, think it would be a wise thing to do. At least we could take the average for some period of time and reduce it by 25 percent and put that in so we would have some way of having additional discipline in the budget. But we don't have that. That is where we are.

Again, I hope we are able to reach some agreement today.

I yield the floor and 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. CONRAD. 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. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator DEWINE be recognized for such time as he will consume and that I then be recognized following him.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2007

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.J. Res. 100, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will report the joint resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 100) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2007, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the joint reso-

lution be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the joint resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

If not, without objection, it is so ordered.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 100) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL CHRISTOPHER P. LYONS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, this afternoon I come to the Senate floor to pay tribute to Marine LCpl Christopher Lyons from Mansfield, OH. On July 28, 2005, Lance Corporal Lyons was killed when his unit encountered hostile fire in Iraq. He was only 24 years old.

Lance Corporal Lyons is survived by his wife Bethany and their daughter Ella; his mother Phyllis Lyons; his father and step-mother, Paul and Debbie Lyons; his grandmothers Irmil Humphreys and Joyce Lyons; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Christopher's family and friends remember him as an exceptional young man, someone who was always full of fun. With a quick wit and an infectious smile, his own love of life always brought happiness to those around him. Caring, selfless, loving, and extremely intelligent, Christopher had the gift of bringing out the best in everyone. He was simply the type of person who stood out in a crowd.

Christopher graduated in 1999 from Shelby High School, where he was enrolled in the Tech Prep Program at Pioneer Career and Technology Center. His vice-principal, Tim Tarvin, describes him as a "big-hearted kid, who always wanted to do the right thing for people."

Kevin Adkins, Christopher's youth pastor, remembers the impact that Christopher had on everyone who knew him. He said this:

As a teenager, [Christopher] was the type of man that I have always strived to be. I'm not so sure how much I actually taught him, but just by his life, alone, he has taught me volumes. As a pastor, I was both humbled and uplifted by Chris's excellence and tenacity toward life. His example will live on in the many lives (like ours) that he has touched. I hope to raise my own two sons to be of such caliber.

After completing school, Christopher became a sales representative in the advertising department at the News Journal in Mansfield, Ohio. Advertising Director Scott Miller describes him as a polite young man who always took his obligations seriously. And Tom Brennan, publisher of the News Journal, said this about him:

Christopher was an outstanding young man. He was the ultimate professional. Simply put, he was polite and positive. Any employer would have found a spot for him. The staff here will surely miss him.

Christopher's widow Bethany recalls her husband's ability to make everyone

laugh and the way that he would tickle her to get her to smile. They were married in September 2003. Christopher's youth pastor remembers meeting Bethany for the first time. He remarked, "I will always remember that I thought you two were the cutest couple I have ever seen. It would take a very special person to catch Chris's eye."

Christopher was inspired to join the military by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. His unit was called to active duty in 2005, and Christopher was sent to California for training. In March of that same year, he was deployed to Iraq.

Months before his deployment, Christopher and Bethany became expectant parents. For Christopher, who was so devoted to his family, it was a momentous occasion, and he was so proud of a t-shirt he wore with the word "Daddy" on the front of it.

Christopher's daughter Ella was born while her father was serving in Iraq. Although he was overseas, Christopher was able to see his new daughter on a web camera and in the many photos that his wife and his mother sent to him. And as she grows up, Ella will have numerous emails and photos from Christopher to treasure.

Christopher regularly wrote to family and friends from Iraq. Two of these letters were sent to the News Journal in Mansfield and were published in their editorial pages. The letters told about Christopher's experience in Iraq, and what it was like to lose a sergeant in his unit during combat. "When all is said and done," he wrote, "the greatest act is when one of our own gives his or her life in service [to] our country and each other."

This, of course, is the sacrifice that Christopher, himself, made for our Nation and for the ideals of freedom and democracy that we all hold dear. Christopher believed in his mission in Iraq. And, while paying tribute to eight of his Marine brothers who had fallen in combat, he wrote the following in one of his letters:

The Corps values of honesty, courage and commitment have served as our cornerstone as we press on to put down the insurgency and win the war on terror.

The people [in the] villages were grateful for our presence, often showing gratitude and appreciation by offering tea, blankets, or simply a smile and wave.

Seeing this reaffirms that we have a purpose working toward a greater good in this country. Honoring our fallen brothers, we will continue the fight upholding the highest standards and working to break this dark oppressive force that lingers over the Iraqi citizens.

These are very impressive words, Mr. President, from a young man who was just 24-years-old.

Christopher's widow remembers that Christopher realized he could be killed while in serving in Iraq. But, she also remembers that Christopher, after being deployed, "saw how much good the United States was doing for Iraq."

Christopher's first person accounts of Lima Company's heroism spread to the