

force winds that forced dog musher Lou Packer and his dogs to be airlifted to safety, and he and his team had to quit the race. He described what I would call life-threatening weather conditions by saying:

We were climbing over this mountain and we got hit by this wind that hit us like a hammer. The temperature dropped—started plummeting—and I lost the trail. And the wind started to build and build, and then the wind got bad, so I climbed in my sled and it was pretty much a survival situation at this point. I threw all the gear out of my sled and climbed in and zipped it up; it was probably 30, 35 below, I have no idea.

These are the types of individuals who train all year long with their dogs to prepare for this incredible race. So it is not just the musher whose success we celebrate but it is these incredible four-legged athletes that are absolutely astounding.

Some of the other mushers out on the trail are pretty extraordinary folks, such as John Baker, out of Nome, Sebastian Schnuelle and Aaron Burmeister. They were describing other conditions along the trail. Schnuelle described it as brutal, but he said:

At times the wind was blowing so hard out of Shaktoolik that his dog team moved sideways.

Well, when you have about 15 or 16 dogs pulling a loaded sled and a musher and you have winds that are blowing you sideways, you know you are in some weather. He commented further:

First we had snow and wind. Now we have wind and wind.

Well, earlier this afternoon, thousands gathered at the famous burlwood arch on Front Street in Nome, AK, to cheer on Lance Mackey as his dogs carried him to victory over his extremely talented and resilient competitors from all over the world. This is an international race, most absolutely. Lance and his team of canines completed the race a little less than 3 hours short of 10 days.

Imagine yourself standing on the back of sled runners going over mountain ranges, going through ice and snow, in temperatures of 30 below and the wind howling at you. And that is fun, ladies and gentlemen. This is man and dog against Mother Nature, and the best teams sure are winning.

Alaskan newspapers tell a story of Lance's fired-up dog team after taking his only 24-hour break during the race. He broke in a town called Takotna. After the layover was completed—you have to rest for 24 hours, mandatory, because sometimes your teams don't want to rest; they want to keep moving. Well, after this layover was completed, Lance's 16 dogs were barking and pulling at their tug lines like they were leaving the race's starting line. Lance said he had this amazing run, and he was going to put the bale of straw out for the dogs to rest. He had every intention of stopping, but then he sees that his dogs are yelping and barking to get going, so he takes off. He said:

They're telling me what to do. So I dumped the straw, and it's been heaven ever since.

What you have here, with this individual musher, Lance Mackey, who cares so deeply for the health and the condition of these four-legged athletes, is a guy who has shown a great mastery of working with and training these canine athletes for the sport of dog mushing. The Anchorage Daily News last year, when he won, stated:

A musher doesn't win four straight 1,000 mile Yukon Quests and two straight Iditarods by making dogs run. He wins by making dogs want to run.

Lance describes working with his dogs this way: He says:

The biggest challenge working with a large team of dogs is the individual personalities. Like a classroom full of kids, all with issues, wants, questions, some barking wildly to get my attention, and then there are some who just do what needs to be done and require only a nod or a smile. Every dog is different. Every need is different. That is what I love. The reward is seeing them all come together as a team working for a common goal. It's just cool.

I had the opportunity last week—when I was up in the State for the ceremonial start of the Iditarod—to go around and talk with the mushers and see all their teams. I had a chance to see Larry, his lead dog. My favorite is Lippy. I just kind of like the name, but Lippy has great little eyebrows. My favorite picture is with Lippy, but these dogs all have personalities unto themselves. And when they do come together as a team to do these incredible athletic feats, we must acknowledge and respect them.

Lance Mackey continues to impress all of us with his remarkable achievements and record-setting performances. He is an inspiration to others who struggle with cancer. He named his dog kennel up north the Lance Mackey's Comeback Kennel. I think that is most appropriate.

So it is my honor today to stand before the Senate to congratulate Lance Mackey and his team of amazing dogs. Lance is a world-class dog musher and a true Alaskan hero, and I wish him and his team continued success and good health in the future.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that tomorrow morning, March 19, following a period of morning business, the Senate proceed to H.R. 146; that upon the bill being reported, there be 20 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled between Senators BINGAMAN and COBURN or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of this time, the Senate proceed

to vote in relation to the amendments as listed below and that the order with respect to time prior to votes and vote sequencing remain in effect: amendment No. 677, No. 682, No. 683; that upon disposition of all amendments, there be 30 minutes of debate with respect to the bill, equally divided and controlled between Senators BINGAMAN and COBURN or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate then proceed as provided for under the order of March 17, with all other provisions remaining in effect.

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

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of H.R. 146, the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business.

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

EARMARKS DEBATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for several months now we have been discussing earmarks or congressionally directed spending. This body has heard many false charges about earmarks. We have heard that earmarks amount to wasteful spending. We have heard that taxpayers should not support these projects. We have even heard that earmarks don't actually benefit our States.

Fortunately, my constituents understand that the rhetoric on earmarks doesn't match the facts.

Nevadans know that these projects are brought to me by their mayors, council members, and city managers. Nevadans know that, as their Senator, I understand their needs better than a faceless bureaucrat in Washington. And most importantly, Nevadans know how valuable earmarks are in a small State like ours to expand medical services, build infrastructure, and provide other services.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the following editorial from Las Vegas Review-Journal columnist John L. Smith. Mr. Smith accurately points out the hypocrisy surrounding the earmarking debate and provides examples of many beneficial earmarks for Nevada.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

[From Las Vegas Review-Journal, Mar. 18, 2009]

JOHN L. SMITH: LET'S DO RIGHT-WING THING AND SEND THAT PORK BACK TO WASHINGTON
Here's your chance, Nevada.