

every year to quickly calculate what the disasters were last year and jam it against some budget. It is either going to be education that gets gutted or health that gets gutted or agriculture that gets gutted or homeland security. I do not want to have to be the one to call the thousands of Border Patrol agents whom I have helped to fund in my budget or have to call Senator JOHN MCCAIN or Senator KYL and say: I am sorry. We have to lay off all the Border Patrol agents along the border in Arizona for a year or two because we had a big storm in Miami, and I have to send the money to Miami.

Whoever heard of such a thing. That is what the Republicans in the House have sent to us. It should be rejected on its face. There is a better way to move forward, and the way is in the Budget Control Act that our leaders wisely have already agreed to.

So we will have this vote tomorrow. Again, I think I have raised three excellent points about why the House approach is wrong and why our approach is correct. If someone wants to come and debate it, I will be happy to maybe try to explain it a little bit more.

I can understand some on the other side who say: We have to find a way to pay for it, even if we have already negotiated, et cetera, but when the other side refuses to put even a new penny on the table to help with some of these things, it makes it even harder to achieve what we are trying to achieve.

I thank the Presiding Officer. I hope my colleagues will hear these arguments and let me know if there is anything further we can explain on it. But I think the picture says a thousand words.

I will close with this again: No American should have to sit on their roof, while the water rises, and identify an offset to finance their own rescue. We are a stronger nation than that. We are a bigger nation than that. We most certainly can provide the funding for FEMA, for the Corps of Engineers, and other funding in the way our Budget Control Act stipulates in this budget.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

LIHEAP FUNDING

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here to urge that my colleagues in Congress and the Obama administration provide the funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program or LIHEAP. As you know, in Connecticut, LIHEAP provides immediate critical heating assistance for families and seniors in need during these freezing cold winter months.

Last year, more than 45,000 New Hampshire households received LIHEAP funds. That is more than 106,000 individuals. But unfortunately this year, many of those families have been on waiting lists. Funding for the program has been in limbo at a time when temperatures are dropping.

The Department of Health and Human Services here in Washington has released \$1.7 billion, but so much more is needed. Making matters worse, the Energy Information Administration projects a 10-percent increase in the price of heating oil this winter. That is the highest average winter price ever predicted.

In New Hampshire, more than half our homes rely on home heating oil. It is one of the highest percentages in the country, and the number of families who need assistance is growing every day. State offices are being forced to change eligibility levels for funding as they grapple with uncertainty over future funds.

There are two things that can be done in order to immediately address this situation before it escalates into an even more serious crisis. First, Congress needs to pass an Omnibus appropriations bill as soon as possible. I am very pleased to see the positive progress on this issue; that there has been an agreement announced on an Omnibus appropriations measure.

Hopefully, we are on track to pass that bill either today or tomorrow. The omnibus includes nearly \$3.5 billion in funding for LIHEAP. But we need to get that money out the door. Once Congress has spoken, is that the administration needs to release additional LIHEAP funds as quickly as possible.

The \$1.7 billion that has already been released is not enough. But the knowledge that additional LIHEAP funds are pending in the omnibus bill we are about to pass should give President Obama the assurance he needs to release more money. I hope once the budget is passed the administration will release these additional funds as soon as possible, because at this holiday season, what better gift could we provide to those families in need than to make sure they have the funds to keep their houses warm this season.

I know it is difficult to argue for more funding these days because of our deficit. Its challenges are clear. In fact, in the Senate, we have already voted, and I was one of those votes, for more than \$1 trillion in cuts to Federal spending this year.

I have continued to call for a comprehensive, balanced, bipartisan plan that looks at both revenue flows and spending. I have been part of the working group, a bipartisan working group, that now has over 40 Senators calling for a \$4 trillion deficit reduction proposal over the next 10 years. But when we cut our budget, we need to look at wasteful spending, at duplicative programs, and at subsidies to industries that no longer need our help.

LIHEAP energy assistance for low-income families does not fall under any

of those categories. It is not a frivolous program. It is a program that ensures that vulnerable citizens in New Hampshire and across this country are not forgotten and left in the cold this winter.

I have been hearing from people across New Hampshire about the difficulties they are going to face if this funding is not available and available soon. I wish to just share one of those stories. It is the story of Kim Brandolini of Nashua. In 2010, Kim suffered a series of strokes that left her disabled and unable to work. LIHEAP funds covered nearly all her monthly fuel costs last year.

But this year, because of the cuts, she is on the waiting list. She does not know how she is going to pay to heat her home. She already owes the oil company \$600, and last year she had to pay \$6,000 to replace a broken boiler. Kim is only 44 years old. She is raising a son all by herself. Previously, she served for 14 years in the Army Reserve. Kim does not deserve to be in this situation.

In Nashua, which is one of the warmest parts of New Hampshire, the average nightly low is below freezing for nearly half the year.

If we don't find a way to fund LIHEAP now, Kim and thousands like her will have no way to keep their families safe and warm. We need to act, and we need to act quickly. Already, the delay in funding LIHEAP has prevented States such as New Hampshire from taking advantage of more affordable bulk purchases of home heating oil. The bottom line is, now that we have a budget agreement, we need to release additional funds so that thousands of New Hampshire families stay warm and don't have to make impossible choices between their basic needs this winter. We can't leave families such as Kim Brandolini's out in the cold this winter. I hope we can get this budget passed as soon as possible and that the Obama administration will release additional LIHEAP funds before Christmas and the end of the year.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Texas.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would like to address the Senate on the subject of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which has been reported to be part of the proposed package that would contain the extension of the payroll tax holiday and the expiring unemployment insurance benefits.