

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for 1 additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. MURRAY. By objecting to going to conference right now, what Senate Republicans who are objecting are doing is pushing us to a place where the debt limit, by virtue of timing, may be a part of the discussion. I ask the Senators to think about what they are doing by their objection, in forcing us into that position, and suggest that by allowing us to go to conference—we will have a better chance of not—

AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT OF 2013—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The hour of 5:30 having arrived, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Michigan.

AMENDMENT NO. 998

Ms. STABENOW. I call for regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. S. 954 is the pending business.

Ms. STABENOW. On behalf of Senator LEAHY, I call up amendment No. 998.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW], for Mr. LEAHY, proposes an amendment numbered 998.

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, we have made great progress today. I thank colleagues for their work today bringing forth amendments. We will continue to work with Members as we go forward tomorrow, putting together a number of votes to bring before the body. We are working hard to do everything possible to complete this legislation by the end of the week. I think we are on a good track.

I announce on behalf of the two leaders that there will be no more votes this evening.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business until 6:30, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Louisiana.

TRAGEDY IN OKLAHOMA

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I really appreciate the hard work of the Senators from Michigan and Mississippi, moving a farm bill through

the Senate. It is one of the most important bills we will take up this year. Action on this bill is long overdue. I am very hopeful we can continue to make progress and produce a bill that is excellent for every region of our country. Of course, representing the South, we always like to have special attention given to our agricultural needs. The Senator from Michigan certainly has been attuned to the farmers in rural communities in Louisiana. We appreciate her leadership.

I come to the floor today, though, just for a few moments to speak about the tragedy unfolding in Oklahoma, in Moore, OK, a city that was devastated—portions of the city in the suburban areas—by a horrible tornado, one of the largest to hit our Nation in quite some time. While I do not know all of the details, I understand that it was a very high level tornado that stayed on the ground for almost 40 minutes. This was miles wide and created a terrible path of destruction. There are, of course, adults and children who lost their lives. Recovery and rescue is still underway as I speak. I am certain that the delegations—both the Senate and House Members from Oklahoma—are doing everything they can, working with the Governor and local officials, to provide as much support as they will need.

I come to the floor as the chair of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security and I come to the floor as a Senator who unfortunately has had a lot of experience in disasters to say how proud I am that there is about \$11 billion available, without the requirement or necessity of an offset, for the people of Oklahoma. This was a battle that was fought over a year ago, led by Senator HARRY REID and me and others. This arrangement was made in the Budget Control Act so that there would be a significant pot of money set aside in the event that disasters such as this happened, whether it was a tornado or an earthquake or a fire or a flood. It has happened again.

We don't know exactly when these disasters are going to happen. We don't know the exact nature of them. But we most certainly know from past experience and everything that our science tells us about the changes in the atmosphere that they are going to happen and that they are likely going to get worse. That is why I have been very focused on this issue.

I am proud of this Senate, Republicans and Democrats, but I am very proud of the support of the Democratic leaders on this bill to say now is not the time—not this afternoon, not tomorrow morning, not Friday, not Monday—to be debating offsets for victims of the Oklahoma tornado. After a disaster, our citizens do not need or want a debate on funding. What they want is help, and they are going to get it from the committee I chair.

Our people suffered so much in Katrina, Rita, and Gustav. I have watched the east coast have to recover

from Irene and from Sandy. I have seen horrible tornadoes in Missouri. The last thing people want when they are digging their loved ones out of rubble and preparing, unfortunately, for funerals that are going to have to occur after what happened—the last thing they want to see Congress do is debate about how and when we are going to pay for this disaster. We are going to send them the money they need to recover.

I want to say this to Senator COBURN, my good friend who is not on the floor—I do respect his consistency on this issue. Even when a tornado hit his State, he is still calling for offsets. He has been consistent, but in my view he has been consistently wrong. There will be no offsets. There is no need for offsets. I will not support offsets. The majority of Democrats, if not the entire Democratic caucus, will not support offsets for Americans in need in disasters. What we are going to do is support appropriate help and sufficient help for them.

Let me say for the record that because of the Sandy supplemental—which I also fought for with my colleagues from the Northeast—we were able to put some reforms in that bill. It was not just "send the money and do what you will with it." We sent money to the Northeast. We also sent them new tools in a bigger, stronger toolbox to help them with a better recovery.

We have a lot more to do in the Northeast. That is a subject for another day. I realize they are in lots of difficulty. But we did send some new tools that will help, even with Oklahoma.

First, we sent them the ability to quickly establish mutually agreed upon estimates for project costs. That has been a real problem with recovery in the past, with local governments arguing one thing, the Feds offering something else. We now have a better, quicker process to agree on what the project costs to get it built more quickly. The project cost will be validated by an independent panel of experts protecting the taxpayer, which is important. Applicants are now allowed to consolidate projects in a common-sense way to build back smarter, reducing future recovery costs.

Most important for this disaster—we fought hard for this in Sandy—finally, there are some provisions in the recovery bill that will allow children to be the center of attention. Sadly, we have lost some children in this disaster. Sadly, many children were injured and probably thousands of children have been traumatized. But because of the new bill we passed under Sandy, there are some provisions to help.

In addition, families can receive daycare now through their supplemental, so the parents who are going to have to figure out a way to get back to work and rebuild their businesses and their communities and their houses can have some additional Federal childcare, which will help.