

our lives. I encourage my colleagues to consider the Health Care Choice Act and to move away from this idea that more government control, more government mandates is actually going to help us get more Americans insured.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

(The remarks of Mr. COLEMAN are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

(The remarks of Mr. BOND are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the attached from the Office of Compliance be printed in the RECORD today pursuant to section 304(b)(1) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1384(b)(1)).

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

U.S. CONGRESS,
OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE,
Washington, DC, April 16, 2008.

Hon. ROBERT C. BYRD
President Pro Tempore, U.S. Senate, Hart Office
Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BYRD: Section 304(b)(1) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA), 2 U.S.C. 1384(b)(1), requires that, with regard to the initial proposal of substantive regulations under the CAA, the Board "shall publish a general notice of proposed rule-making" and "shall transmit such notice to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate for publication in the Congressional Record on the first day on which both Houses are in session following such transmittal."

The Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance is transmitting herewith the enclosed Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The Board requests that the accompanying Notice be published in both the House and Senate versions of the Congressional Record on the first day on which both Houses are in session following receipt of this transmittal.

Any inquiries regarding the accompanying Notice should be addressed to Tamara E. Chrisler, Executive Director of the Office of Compliance, 110 2nd Street, S.E., Room LA-200, Washington, D.C. 20540; 202-724-9250, TDD 202-426-1912, tchr@loc.gov.

Sincerely,

SUSAN S. ROBFOGEL,
Chair, Board of Directors.

(Editor's note: The notice of Proposed Rulemaking is printed in the RECORD dated April 21, 2008, at page 6422)

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in these last days our sympathies have

been stirred by the shocking images of suffering and loss that have come from Burma. Last week's cyclone was one of the most devastating in memory. The damage to Burma's infrastructure, to its cities and towns and villages, is staggering.

The human toll won't be known for weeks. As many as 100,000 are thought to be dead. Thousands more are unaccounted for and injured. And those who survived face grave challenges. By all accounts, potable water and food are scarce, increasing the threat of disease. And shelter is hard to find.

This kind of suffering tests our powers of comprehension. But the extent of the damage, combined with the already primitive economic conditions imposed by the Burmese regime and the regime's sluggish response to the storm, means this suffering will be far greater than it otherwise might have been and will last far longer than it otherwise would.

We have heard reports that little or no notice was given to the people about the severity of the storm. And while the U.S. and other donors have expressed a clear willingness to assist, the Burmese regime has continued to resist allowing outside donors, such as the U.S., in.

The U.S. has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to help the victims of natural disasters. Our generous response to the 2004 tsunami is a tribute to generosity and compassion of Americans, as was our response to the flooding of Bangladesh in the early 1990s. We responded generously to the 1990 earthquake in the Philippines, an act of kindness that was met with deep gratitude. The U.S. has helped this region of the world again and again, and now we stand willing to help the people of Burma.

Precious time has been, and continues to be, wasted. Why? Because rather than focusing on preparations for the storm, the political leaders in Burma were focused on a sham constitutional referendum scheduled for this Saturday. While all of the energies of government were needed to prepare for relief efforts, the regime was thinking of solidifying its control over the country. Its only concession to the critics—as the extent of the dead, the missing, and the injured became known—was an agreement to postpone the referendum in certain parts of the country.

This is not the first time the Burmese regime has put the political risks of letting in outsiders over urgent humanitarian needs. In 2004, the same junta rejected foreign aid after the tsunami. The only difference this time is that the devastation to Burma and the Burmese people is on a much larger scale.

If Saturday's referendum were legitimate, its timing would be merely irresponsible and crass. Yet everything

about this Saturday's referendum is a farce. The process leading up to it has been marked by oppressive measures that, of course, are not typically associated with free and open political debate. It's a crime, for instance, to criticize the document.

The substance of the constitution is also profoundly antidemocratic. It prohibits Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the party that won Burma's last free and democratic election, from holding high office. Former political prisoners and activists could find themselves unable to run for Parliament. And the Burmese military would control key ministries and hold a quarter of the seats in the national legislature.

This is not a constitution. This is a fig leaf to place over the junta's oppressive rule.

The people of Burma are already suffering from the tragedy of a terrible natural disaster. Now they are being forced to participate in a farce. Last week's cyclone revealed more than nature's power and life's fragility. It revealed, once again, the inhumanity of Burmese junta—not only in its disregard for the people suffering from the storm, but also in its callous insistence that, in the midst of so much suffering, a sham constitutional referendum validating its authority go forward.

This is a time of great sadness in Burma. It is also a time of renewed outrage at the oppressive regime that controls it. On occasion, the leaders of such regimes reveal their warped minds to the world. This is such a time. It's my hope the world will take notice.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to address the terrible toll taken by the recent cyclone in Burma.

It is unimaginable to me that the people of Burma, already struggling under the weight of tyranny, could be expected to bear further hardship. The daily trudge for existence faced by the Burmese is heart-wrenching; and yet now their suffering has increased. On Saturday, May 3, their country was struck by a horrible cyclone, an unfortunately common occurrence in Southeast Asia. U.S. diplomats estimate the death toll from this storm could be as high as 100,000, victims of a 120 mph wind and a storm surge that has obliterated entire villages. The United Nations estimates that hundreds of thousands of people have been left without basic necessities such as food, potable water, and shelter.

The Burmese military regime has compounded this crisis through political repression, economic mismanagement, and xenophobia. But the tragedy of Burma's government cannot and should not blind us to the human suffering inflicted by this most recent disaster. The international community must take immediate steps to alleviate some of the worst deprivations of this humanitarian crisis. To this end, I am proud and humbled that two of our own