September 8, 2005

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

I appreciate the patience of my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. Frist. Very briefly, Mr. President, this supplemental will be the last vote of the evening for the week. We will be here tomorrow to continue business on Commerce-Justice-Science. Amendments can be offered either tonight or tomorrow. There will be no rollcall votes tomorrow. We will be voting on Monday. Instead of 5:30, it will be a little bit later than that. We will announce that specific time on Monday.

We will finish Commerce-Justice-Science early next week. Senators should not wait to offer amendments. Either offer them tonight or tomorrow. We will wrap this bill up in the very early part of next week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Allen). The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. McConnell. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Mr. Stevens) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. Vitter).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. McConnell. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Mr. Stevens) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. Vitter).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Mr. Stevens) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. Vitter).

Mr. DURBIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin—not for his participation in the development and presentation of this bill to the Senate, I also especially thank the Congressman from California, Jerry Lewis, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and other colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, who helped get that bill passed today in the House of Representatives. We appreciate the prompt action on the President’s request. We thank all Senators for their cooperation in agreeing to the expedited procedure for consideration of the bill today and passing the bill. This will get needed relief to the disaster victims in coastal States of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, the Gulf Coast, and others who have been injured or suffered.

We thank the leadership for scheduling this vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

POSTDISASTER RESPONSE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to discuss, for a moment on the record, what I have been telling some Senators individually and in groups about the management of postdisaster activities in the Gulf Coast area. Let me begin by saying that I am not going to add to the various discussions being had about who should do what for persons, if any, made mistakes in terms of controlling this disaster, the scourge of this hurricane. Did somebody not do what they were supposed to do or did somebody do it too late? If so, who was it, when did it occur, and why did the person not do their job? Was anyone at fault in responding to this natural disaster, if anyone. I am not talking about that. I hear the rancor and the partisanship in the discussion about who should do that.

I am talking about the fact that we have now the most difficult situation that America on its homeland has ever had to manage. We have never had anything as difficult as this to manage—the confusion, the disorder, individual suffering, grief, displacement, hardship, property destruction, pollution. All of those things are happening literally hundreds of thousands of people in three-plus States. We are currently in the immediate aftermath of the force that brought all those things upon us as a nation.

How many people have been displaced—sometimes called refugees, but they will not be referred to as such by me—how many men, women, and children? I understand that the numbers displaced, disaster before this did not exceed 30,000. It was something under 30,000. For this one disaster, there were over 450,000 people displaced. Anybody who thinks that what we have in place to manage a crisis of this magnitude is fine doesn’t understand the proportions of this event.

We don’t have in place the tools, the wherewithal, the ability to manage this event, maintain order as far as the communities, the country and its people and its businesses and its charities are concerned. We have completed the task of responding to this emergency.

We don’t have any way of doing that. Anybody who is sitting around here contemplating the work of its committee, be it a chairman of a committee or the chairman of a subcommittee, and thinking they know how to do that, let me tell you, they don’t. I regret to say it. In all deference to the Senator of whom I am an opponent, I have a standing committee and a subcommittee. They are both involved in this event. One is Energy and Natural Resources. The other is Appropriations for Energy and Water, which is literally all the energy around there, pipelines and the like, and the Corps of Engineers.

I appreciate the patience of my colleagues. We don’t have any way of doing anything wrong. It is just that we don’t know what our goal is. We don’t know where we are going. We know people need checks. We know people need money. We know people need accelerated Social Security and Medicaid benefits. We also have the responsibility of the Committee is as apt to be meaningless or wrong or moving in the wrong direction, when looked at a year from now, as it is to be appropriate.

It isn’t that we are doing anything wrong; it is that we don’t know what our goal is. We don’t know where we are going. We know people need money. We know people need accelerated Social Security and Medicaid benefits. We also have the responsibility of people who have no plan without help. But does that mean we should hold a hearing in the housing Appropriations Committee and decide: Here is a new program. We are going to fund the program. It will be grants and loans, 100,000 new houses for these people? Of course it doesn’t mean that at all.

We need somebody to put the plan together and decide what the housing situation is going to be like for these people. Do we need interim help? Will that be in the form of vouchers? And who will start putting that together? I could go on. This is not because anybody has not done their job. Forget about that. Whatever the job that was to be done, right or wrong, is finished. What you have to do now is rehabilitate, replan, and put in place what must be done within the laws of America, with the dollars of our taxpayers.

I came here in 1972, believe it or not. I was 39 years old. I don’t know how I got here. I was at the time of the great big assignment, one committee, Public Works. You new Senators who worry about your committee assignments these days, I only had one. I got
a very auspicious job, too. I was ranking committee member on a subcommittee on disaster relief. I thought: Well, I will never have a hearing, but when I have been here long enough, I will go to another committee.

But lo and behold, Agnes hit. Agnes was a giant hurricane that caused a Northeastern flood, all the way through Pennsylvania. Sure enough, I went to work. I learned about disasters.

But what I also learned was that through the good wisdom of a Senator, who, as I now understand it, was Hugh Scott, the minority leader from Pennsylvania—he used to sit over here when we had very few seats on this side of the Aisle—he talked Richard Nixon into appointing a man to be in charge of the Agnes recovery named Frank Carlucci. You’ve all heard his name of late. However they found him, I don’t know. They must have beenclairvoyant; they must have known he was someone. LBJ was President Nixon’s on the ground representative for Agnes for 3 or 4 years, and we came out of that. Today his job would be comparable to having all involved computers run out of one office by people in the bunch of Government, as if the OMB moved over there to handle things. Everything ran according to plans that came out of Carlucci’s office of recovery. Nixon did not use a Marshall plan. He put somebody in charge of these things, the resources he ought to use and what our options were.

From that, he went on to other areas of success, so they must have picked the right guy. He held two Cabinet positions. He was a great success in business. That has nothing to do with what I am talking about, but he was apparently a very talented man. Now this President ought to pick a very talented leader, someone who is not in the Government, for a similar task. I mean no offense to the current establishment working in the Gulf Coast. They are there because we had an emergency—a disaster. But they are not there to handle things. Everything ran according to plans that came out of Carlucci’s office of recovery. Nixon did not use a Marshall plan. He put somebody in charge of these things, the resources he ought to use and what our options were.

I think the occupant of the Chair knows this. This recovery plan will go on long beyond the next 2 or 3 years. We better have our recovery efforts, and oversight of those efforts, occur in an orderly manner or can you imagine how many hearings we are going to have? Can you imagine how many committees are going to be involved in saying they are solving this problem? Can you imagine the number of press releases that will be issued by subcommittees that are holding hearings about fixing this thing? Can you imagine the laws they are going to bring down here to the floor to pass saying, we are solving Katrina? All those things ought to come out of somebody who is on the ground analyzing the situation. It doesn’t sound right to say “commander.” It doesn’t sound right to say “general.” But they ought to put somebody in charge by executive order and give them the OMB type of office experts to help them analyze this situation and present to the Congress, through the President, what we need for us to make the decisions about what policies we want.

Far be it from me to know much about managing things because I don’t manage much except in my office, and I am not there all the time. How many hearings we are going to have? Can you imagine how many hearings are going to be involved in saying the OMB type of office experts to us are solving this thing? It never occurred to me. I doubt it ever occurred to us about managing things because I don’t manage much except in my office, and I am not there all the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico, who has the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I am glad I had an opportunity to hear the Senator from New Mexico, who has just spoken, on an obscure subject.

One of the most important things he reminded us of was to try to get in concrete terms the immensity of this disaster. We see it on television. We know there is more to be done than has been done. We know it is going to last a long time. I heard the same facts he did today, that the most displaced families that FEMA has ever had in one of its disasters was 22,000. This is 400,000 or 450,000 or 500,000. In other words, this is 20 times the scale of the worst disaster we have ever had of displaced Americans. And so we are all scrambling. I think it is important for the Senator from New Mexico to have brought that up.

He also heard, as I heard, that one of the last great hurricanes we had was Harvey. I believe. FEMA is just finishing the work on Harvey now 10 years later because it takes a long time to help communities and people get back on their feet. So this is a massive challenge to us all. As the President said, we need to be prepared for bad things here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

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He also heard, as I heard, that one of the last great hurricanes we had was Harvey. I believe. FEMA is just finishing the work on Harvey now 10 years later because it takes a long time to help communities and people get back on their feet. So this is a massive challenge to us all. As the President said, we need to be prepared for bad things here.

It seems to me impossible in this body to avoid partisanship. Sometimes I think we have a playpen over here and a playpen over here, and a few Senators and House Members are always angling for partisan advantage. But this is no time for it. So when those impulses or outbursts occur, my suggestion would be that we go home.

In my case, it will be Maryville, TN. Most of us go home on the weekend or we spend time at the dinner instead of dinner with a lobbyist, that we spend time at the church instead of up here opening their doors, we go down to a shelter, we go down to a church, and we see how the people who sent us here are conducting themselves
in dealing with this tragedy. And we remind ourselves of that, and we take a
lesson from them. When we come back
up here Monday through Friday, then
hopefully we would conduct ourselves
as well as they are conducting them-
selves. They would expect that from us,
and we will do a better job of dealing
with this immense tragedy, 20
times as large as anything we have
seen before.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I
wish to say a word about something
important that happened this after-
noon that is good news for the men and
women in this country who go to col-
lege.

We have the best system of colleges
and universities in the world. I can re-
member Senator KAY BAILEY
HUTCHISON of Texas and Senator
FRIST arranged for a group of us to
meet with the former President of
Brazil, Mr. Cardoso, who had been at
the Library of Congress for a while and
was going back to Brazil. Senator
HUTCHISON said: Mr. Cardoso, what will
you take back to your country about
your stay in the United States? He did
not hesitate for a moment. He said:
Senator HUTCHISON, the excellence of
the American University. He said:
There is nothing in the world like it. It
is one of the greatest strengths of your
country.

There are many reasons for this. I be-
lieve it is because we have created an
environment in which we can bring out
the best. We have 6,000 autonomous for-
profit, nonprofit, State-supported, not-
State-supported institutions, and we have
generous Federal funding that fol-
lows students to the college or univer-
sity of their choice. That market envi-
rонment has permitted us to surpass
the world. We do not just have some of
the best colleges and universities in the
world, we have most of them, and
several of those are in the home State
of the Presiding Officer, in Virginia,
and some of those are in my State as
well.

Today the committee upon which the
Presiding Officer and I serve, the
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee, reported out legislation
that has to do with Federal support for
colleges and universities for the next
4 or 5 years. The importance of that is
this: 60 percent of the students in our
country attending universities,
community colleges, technical institutes,
or for-profit institutions do so with the
support of Federal grants or Federal
loans. Sixty percent of the college and
students are affected by this legislation.

While the details of this legislation
will come out over the next few weeks,
it is important to say two things about
it. One is the remarkably effective job
by Senator ALAN SIMPSON of Wyoming,
Senator ENZI and Senator KEN-
NEDY. This is a complex bill. There are lots of opinions
on it. There are more than 20 of us on
the committee. At a time of great diffi-
culty around here, they produced legis-
lation that we unanimously sup-
ported and agreed upon and will bring
to the Senate floor. It is almost certain
it will go to conference with the House
Representatives and result in a final
bill that we will then send to the Presi-
dent. It was a first-class job of leadership
by Senator ENZI and Senator KEN-
NEDY, and I salute them for it, and I am
glad to have been part of their commit-
tee.

The second thing to say is the bill is
good for students. For students, it in-
creases the amount of Pell Grants from
$4,050 to $4,500 over 5 years. The bill
gives students who want to use their
Pell Grant during the summer the op-
portunity to do so for the first time,
making Pell Grants available year round.

We have a lot of working people
who go to colleges and universities today.
They must complete an academic sem-
esters. Right now they cannot do
that if they are eligible for Federal
support. Now they can under this bill
when it passes. In addition, Pell Grants
will be larger for students who are ma-
paying their own way, paying for foreign
languages, thereby encouraging
students to pursue these fields.

Someone told me in Tennessee last
week that we only had one new physics
teacher who graduated and came into
our schools. I wish there were
one more. We need more homegrown sci-
entists in the United States, and this is
one step to help with that.

The bill is also good for universities
as well as students because it begins to
relieve the oppressive paperwork bur-
den the Federal Government places
on colleges and universities, freeing up
scarce dollars to spend on improving
quality teaching, research, and public
service rather than paperwork.

For example, this legislation creates
an expert panel to review, evaluate,
and streamline the 7,000 Federal regu-
lations that govern grants and loans to
college students. I made a speech on
the floor of the Senate a few months
ago, and I stacked up in several boxes
the 7,000 regulations that every single
one of the 6,000 colleges and univer-
sities has to go through before they
may admit students with a Federal
grant or a Federal loan. That is ridicu-
ously burdensome. The President of
Tennessee, spending on higher edu-
cation has increased by 33.4 percent
over the same period.

I raise this because I hope in our dis-
cussion of the higher education bill
that we will come to an understanding
that one of the principal reasons for the
big increase in tuition is the out-
of-control State spending for Medicaid.
Governors—and the Presiding Officer
and I were both Governors—constantly
have to fight to keep Medicaid spend-
ing under control. If we do not have
enough money left for quality edu-
cation. And if do do not have quality
colleges and universities over the next

Finally, universities doing a good job
of keeping down the rate of loan de-
faults will be given more flexibility in
how they use Federal dollars in grants
and loans to students.

I am especially delighted the bill in-
cludes Teach for America legislation
that I introduced with the Democratic
leader, HARRY REID. Expanding Teach
for America will not only build a corps
of young college graduates who spend 2
years teaching in schools in lower in-
come areas, but a corps of expanding
influential alumni who support quality
public education. I actually believe
that corps of expanding influential
alumni of these tremendously talented
people who graduate from the best col-
lleges and universities in the world and
into the inner city and teach for 2
years will produce for us a corps of
thousands of Americans who know
what they are talking about when the
issue of quality public education comes
up. We have the best colleges and uni-
versities in the world, but they need to
continue to be the best in order to
maintain our standard of living.

The Federal Government is doing its
part. Over the last 5 years, Federal
spending on higher education has in-
creased 71.8 percent. At the same
time, State funding for higher education
has increased on average by only 6.8 per-
cent, partly because of the big increase
in Medicaid costs to States, which have
increased over the same time by 35.6
percent. This lower amount of State
funding has meant that college tuition
at public 4-year institutions has in-
creased 38.2 nationally.

In Tennessee, the situation is equally
pronounced. As I stated, Federal spend-
ing on higher education has increased
71.8 percent over the past 5 years. In
Tennessee, spending on higher edu-
cation has increased about 10 percent
while Medicaid spending has increased
about 30 percent. That means over the
same period the tuition at the Univer-
sity of Tennessee has increased by 33.4
percent.

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