The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SPECTER. I say, this is a license for Senators not to bring amendments to the floor on this bill, but this license is short lived. It is not going to last too long.

I yield the floor. I suggest the adjournment of the Senate today.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 1 hour.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. For other Senators who may want to speak, I may be a little more than an hour or I may be a little more than an hour. I do not intend to be here forever, just in case my colleagues are wondering.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the situation in Louisiana, particularly New Orleans, as it relates to the Katrina hurricane. I do that because of a very devoted constituent by the name of Craig Van Waardhuizen of Cedar Falls, IA, a Baptist church. He approached me because he had bad experiences helping people in New Orleans at the height of the hurricane.

He says things just were not right. That is quite obvious to all of us.

That is short lived. It is not going to last too long.

But FEMA is the one most referred to. That is quite obvious to all of us.

So I promised my friend in Waterloo—

I yield the floor. I suggest the adjournment of the Senate today.
that we were headed back to the staging area. This whole operation seems to lack leadership and direction. We arrived back at the staging area at Le Place. Then we were sent down I-10 to the scale houses and were staged with about 40 other coaches. Even the State patrol assigned to us didn’t know what was going on. About 10 pm a deputy sheriff patrol was waiting—that’s my assumption—for us. We didn’t have any news or information. About 11 pm the State patrol said to wait with the motorcoach as we might be called upon at any time. We decided to make as much rest as we could while we had the opportunity.

So then presumably they slept the evening. That is a presumption on my part because it goes on now to Sunday. September 5 is the fourth day of this tribulation.

Last night was a long night with little sleep as it is hard to sleep on the coach. About 4 am a group of school buses arrived from Houston, TX. They had been told to report to this staging area and wait. The morning passed by very slowly and we never saw or heard from anybody that knew what was actually happening. We are all here to work and provide help and we are just sitting along the interstate. At the same time other State patrol on the interstate a unit of federal border patrol agents is also waiting for instructions. They have been waiting since Tuesday for orders.

So that means that they had been waiting for 5 days, the Federal border patrol was waiting—that’s my assumption—waiting for orders. My writer says:

I asked the state patrol to radio to the main staging area where we fueled to see what was going on. They told me that the patrol had many questions as we did. It sure seems like mass confusion and no clear leader. I really wonder who is in charge of this operation. About noon a guy shows up in an orange vest and tells us that we are moving to a new staging area at Lake Charles, LA. Soon the rumor is going around through the drivers that we will be moving people out of temporary shelters to better places. We move to Lake Charles with high hopes that we will finally be moving people. At the edge of Lake Charles we are peeled off into the shoulder of the interstate. With over 60 motorcoaches sitting on the shoulder of a major interstate (I-10), this is an accident waiting to happen. The beds are taken from Houston and are back to Houston as they were told there was no work for them. What a waste of resources to have them drive all the way from Houston to New Orleans only to turn around and head back. A highway patrol escort arrives and leads us to a large parking area at the Lake Charles airport. We are all parked in a row with no instructions. When the first coach is parked a man who tells us he is the dispatcher for this operation arrives and tells us that we are going to regroup.

This man has made arrangements for us to have a hot meal supplied by the Lake Charles Firefighters in the armory at the airport. During this meal he informs us that rooms in a motel have been reserved for us for the night. As we sign up for our rooms we are told to report back tomorrow at 1:30 pm for more instructions. Since the rooms are in Beaumont arrangements to have 500 motorcoaches to take us as a group. At least we will have a good bed to sleep in tonight and we will be able to take a shower:

Now, Monday September 5

Continuing with other drivers reveals only rumors and no facts. About noon we head back to Lake Charles to report in at this temporary dispatch office at the airport. When we report in, we are told there will be no movement until tomorrow. This is disappointing and hard to understand, especially when we were told by the state patrol about this huge need to get people moved. Seems to me that there has to be a better way to organize and run this system. Who is in charge of all of this? Is it just us (drivers)? There is very limited and very poor communication. If I ran operations like this, the company would lose all of its business and funds very quickly.

I think he means his own office—and to any other contact I can come up with doesn’t provide any help. About 2 pm the dispatcher comes around looking for two coaches that have two drivers. We are just what he is looking for and we offer to be of service. He tells us to head to Fort Smith, AR as soon as we can hit the road and to report in at Fort Smith. We head right out and make a stop to eat and get going down the road we find out that a mistake has been made. Instead of Fort Smith at Fort Smith, AR, it is Fort Chaffee. The drive to Fort Chaffee is about 260 miles in 5 hours. Upon arrival we are to report to Fort Chaffee for instructions. As we are travelling we begin to notice many other motorcoaches headed the same way.

September 6, Tuesday.

We arrive . . . and find the directions we were given in Lake Charles to be wrong. Finally, we arrive at Fort Chaffee and enter the base. The guards at the gate are very surprised to see us and they wonder why we are reporting at 2 a.m. The guards give us direction to the area where the people are in housed. We find out that nobody knows why they sent us to this base. Once again I get on the phone calling the numbers I was given. These calls just get a voice mail and calls are not returned. The guards tell us the phone number of the base commander. I give him a call (at 2 a.m.) and have a nice conversation with him. I can see that he has no information to help us out. He suggests getting a motel room and coming back in the morning. There are no motel rooms available and it is now 4 a.m. We decide to head back to Fort Smith to top off the fuel tanks and get a hot breakfast. Looks like we are in a race headed north. It looks like we will be no movement until tomorrow. This is really amazing as we look over the parking lot. We are lined up and the guards at the gate are very confused as to why we are here. We are very upset as they just sit idle. At Lake Charles the parking lot is filled with hundreds of motorcoaches. There are hundreds of coaches and drivers. Many drivers are very upset as they just sit idle. At Lake Charles the parking lot is filled with hundreds of motorcoaches. There are hundreds of coaches and drivers. Many drivers are very upset as they just sit idle. At Lake Charles we are told to report back in the morning and we are also told good luck on finding any lodging. Looks like another night of sleeping in the coach. I make some more calls and find out there is a room at the casino. I call them and ask about rooms and explain what we have been doing. The manager gives us a deal on three rooms for the four of us. At least we will have a bed to sleep in and be able to take a shower in the morning.

September 7, Wednesday.

This is the last day that we can help as we need to return to Iowa tonight. The coaches need to be back to go on charter trips. We will report to the temporary dispatch office early. With hundreds of coaches it doesn’t look good. The dispatcher said there is no work today and the next opportunity is tomorrow. If there is anybody that needs to move north as we could take people north as we head home. Nothing available today and with all the idle coaches it looks like we will be sitting out and we start back home. I am glad that we came down and tried to help. There is a huge sense of disappointment in the fact that we drove about 3,000 total miles and only helped 47 people travel 103 miles. It seems like a huge waste of valuable resources and money. Especially as I look over a parking lot of hundreds of coaches.

Somebody made the order to get all these coaches here and now they sit idle. It easy to see why people get frustrated with the system. With these coaches sitting idle, many school buses were moved to the area and never used. They were sent back home as they weren’t needed. Today we learned that in the city of New Orleans all of the school buses were left to get caught in the flood. Why weren’t they used before the hurricane and flood to get people moved out of harm’s way? Why weren’t they moved before the huge number of public officials at all levels and the news media pointing fingers trying to put the blame on FEMA when they should look at themselves? Why didn’t the school buses get left and not used? Why didn’t people heed the notice to get out and move to a safer area?
I think the whole process needs to be looked at and evaluated for making improvements. We were not the only ones to wonder what was going on. Almost all the drivers were to some charge and they all knew the lines of communication. Of all the people who gave us orders, none of them seemed to understand operations and dispatch. From my viewpoint, I know that many of those who were supposed to manage the coaches didn’t have any idea of what to do and just how much help they needed.

September 19.

After driving through the night we arrived back in Iowa. We are tired and ready to be back in our own homes. The hardship we went through was very minor compared to what others displaced families were going through. As a team, we all agreed that we would go again and we would do whatever we could to provide assistance to people in need. Hopefully, if there is a next time, there will be better organization and all involved parties will work together.

About 10 a.m. I received a call from the dispatcher in Lake Charles saying he had a trip for us. He was looking for us and wondered where we were. This is a good example of how well this was handled. The person I had signed out with yesterday told us that lessons were learned from Katrina. This evening we are headed out with two coaches and four drivers. This combination allows us to get to the staging area in a straight through drive and be ready to work. Our orders call for us to report to a rest stop on 1-49 north of Lafayette, LA. This will be our staging area. We loaded extra supplies on board, take some food and pack some bedding. We learned from the last time of helping that we might have to spend nights sleeping on the coach and we need a high hopes and a thankful heart for this opportunity to provide help. The people who are calling the drivers are aware that we can help until Sunday evening. The drivers and coaches need to be back in Iowa for other charter work next Monday.

September 21.

The drive down was interesting and we saw a lot of different things with the same purpose in mind. We did encounter a slight problem in southern MS. There is a bug that is called the “love bug” which is bad at this time of the year. The love bugs do all of their extra stops to clean the windshields off. These bugs are nasty. Despite the delay we arrived at the staging area about 4:00 pm. The staging area was a rest stop on 1-49 which was closed down for public use. First order of business was to report in and fuel. After fueling, we reported in for duty. The order of business was to report in and fuel. The next step was to get in line and wait for orders. This is sure looking like the Katrina help situation. The old hurry up and wait plan. Fortunately, we had stopped for a good hot meal in Lafayette and were ready to go. As the night moved along it appeared that we were going to sit and do nothing.

September 22.

A short night of limited sleep in the seat of the coach. It is difficult to sleep on a coach. Good thing we brought food with us. We were able to save some snack bars for breakfast. About 7:00 am the dispatcher came looking for two coaches. We took the call and headed into Lafayette to help evacuate people from a hospital. At 9:00 am we were loaded with four hours worth of people. We waited on our orders and we waited and waited. About 1:00 pm a doctor connected with Homeland Security gave us the go ahead. We were part of the convoy moving these people from Lafayette to Monrore, LA. A four hour drive under good conditions. Our passengers had been on the coach since 9:00 am and they were given hot food. A very long day for everybody with no food. All of these people had been moved out of New Orleans by Katrina and now they had to be moved again. We moved these people from a hospital to a gym on the campus of LA Tech in Monroe. Sure am glad we have an escort as the road is jammed with people moving anyhow. Although we are doing the work we came down to do. After unloading the people and helping them get moved into the gym, we took the opportunity to shower in the locker room. That was a refreshing moment. Then the drive back to the staging area. As we watched all who were moving north we wondered if we would be assigned a task as soon as we got back. That turned into a bad assumption. Upon return to the staging area we were re- fled and parked in line. Here we go again, another long night on the coach. Sleep, didn’t come easy and I went for a walk. As I was walking I noticed some empty parking spaces near the front of the line. I went back to the coaches and moved us up in the line with the thought that we might get an assignment quicker. We didn’t come back down to park in a line and wait.

September 23, 2005.

Hurricane Rita is moving closer to shore. Why are we not moving people? The word among the drivers is that there was a coach accident in TX and things are on hold. This brings up the subject of safety. The majority of the coaches in use are top of the line, with little or no safety related issues. However, there are some coaches operating with lights out, broken air brakes and other safety related issues. These coaches should not be used. The pilots to the side of the service until they are repaired. There are more than enough coaches here that are in excellent condition to be used. These coaches should not be used. We are in a stressful situation, moving people whose lives are in danger. The coach accident in TX is a tragic deal. I don’t know if it could have been avoided.

3:00 am, action at last. Ten coaches have been asked to move to the Baton Rouge airport to move people. We are part of the ten. Upon arrival at the airport we report in. Only, the airport was not expecting us and wondered why we were sent. This brings back the thoughts of a couple of weeks ago. The airport folks find a place to park us while they determine the next step. We get parked right next to the National Guard base. The Guard asks all the drivers with the ten coaches in for a hot breakfast. This is very welcome and sure beats the snack foods. After breakfast we head back to the staging area.

Listening to the radio we hear about people who needed help to get out of the area. Why are we sitting here? At this point it seems like we are going to go to the staging area in need as we would arrive at the same time as the hurricane. We can only wonder why.

About 3:00 pm we get orders to move. We are assigned to a layover area in Baton Rouge and told to park along side the building. The rain is starting to come down hard. The coaches left at the rest stop on 1-49 are being moved further north to get out of harms way. Two FEMA representatives come out of the building and brief us. We are parked right along side the FEMA headquarters. We are at the main command post. Our orders are to stay prepared to move in case the building has to be evacuated. This is hard to believe. We have been assigned directly to the FEMA staff. During our discussion we ask if we can stay in the building tonight as we have been in the motorcoach since 9:00 am. The members tell us they will check on that possibility. We never hear from them the rest of the night. The hurricane hits land near the LA Tech interstate line, it is very hard. We are in Baton Rouge. The wind is high and the rain comes down in sheets.

September 24.

With all the wind and the heavy rain it was difficult to get much sleep. I was able to believe and understand why we were not allowed to come in the building. It would have
Another long night of driving and we finally get home, a very tired group. This has proved to be another growing experience. Sleeping every night in the motorcoach, only getting a good meal a day, and only having two showers all week. We all learned a lot about ourselves and what we are able to do when needed.

The hardest thing to accept this trip was sitting out the hurricane in the motorcoach. It is very difficult to understand and accept the fact that we were not allowed in the FEMA building during the hurricane. Good enough to be a safety valve, but not good enough to be allowed in the building.

I hope that in the future I will have an opportunity to share with the right folks and work with them to improve the system and the way it works as it relates to motorcoaches. Especially in the area of equipment safety and using motorcoaches to move large numbers of people in an emergency.

That is the end of his diary. He ends with a little paragraph that says:

Thoughts of Craig Van Waardhuizen while working through the Katrina and Rita hurricanes in LA. I was lead member of a four member team providing motorcoach service with two motorcoaches. We are Terminal Manager and Operations Director for Northwest Iowa Transportation, Inc (a motorcoach carrier in Iowa with membership in UMA, ABA and IMG).

Craig Van Waardhuizen.

I thank my friend Craig for sharing his experiences with the people of the Nation through this, but most importantly for the Senate and my Senate colleagues to take this into consideration.

PRAIRIE LAKES RESPONDS TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have one additional statement in regard to the Katrina situation.

As I said earlier before I read Craig’s diary, I am a member of the Prairie Lakes Baptist Church at Cedar Falls, IA. Immediately after the hurricane, our church in the following 3 weeks sent three different delegations—in other words, three different teams; a team the first week, a different team the second week, and a different team the third week.

Our church in Brookhaven, MS, and the First Baptist Church in Ocean Springs, MS, in their efforts to feed people who were in need and house people who were in need and do other things.

I have this letter which was sent to the pastor of our church, Pastor John Fuller, from the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Oceans Springs, MS.

It says:

Dear Pastor:

I have never had the privilege of meeting you—but I know you because I have experienced the heart of your people.

Mark Sherwood, Mike and Denise Goyen, Dalen Grimm, Mary Palmer, Laney Poyner, Mark Sherwood, Julie Starbeck, Katie Trautmann, Lynn Trautmann, Beth Wion, and Rick Wion.

MISSION OF MERCY

Cedar Falls Church Members Help Evacuees in Mississippi

(BY KAREN HELMINSLAND)

Brookhaven, MS.—Homeless people’s paradise.

That’s how Lincoln County residents refer to Brookhaven in the southwest Mississippi town which looks like it, but people like living here,” boasted Clifford Britt, manager of the Brookhaven Lincoln County Airport.

A 17-person crew from Prairie Lakes Church in Cedar Falls in town to help with hurricane relief wasn’t had time to assess Brookhaven’s best features. They drove in late last week. They had to have a deeper understanding of the disaster they are facing as they share meals and conversation with survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

“I’ve got to do it—I’ve got to do it—I’ve got to do it—I’ve got to do it—I’ve got to do it,” said Nancy Killian, 58, of Cedar Falls. “We mingle with them, give hugs when we can.”

Located 100 miles north of New Orleans, Brookhaven is dotted with some 1,600 people displaced by the hurricane, said Mayor Bob Massingill. Many evacuees have