The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable Sam Brownback, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER
The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:
Let us pray.
O God, who reigns forever, You are a shelter for the oppressed and a refuge in times of trouble. Give our Nation the shield of Your favor that it may bless our world. Guide our Nation's legislative branch with wisdom, integrity, and unity. Strengthen the executive and judicial branches that they will serve Your purposes. Infuse each citizen with a desire to walk on the right road in order to honor You and serve this land we love.

Bless us all with strength of will, steadiness of purpose, and power to persevere. Remind us that it is better to attempt and fail in some great thing, rather than not to try at all. Lord, teach us to number our days that we may have hearts of wisdom. We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
The Honorable Sam Brownback led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:
I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. Stevens).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 9, 2005.

To the Senate:
Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable Sam Brownback, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWNBACK thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER
The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE
Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, today we are going to begin with a 1-hour period for morning business, and then we will resume consideration of the Department of Defense authorization bill. We made good progress on that measure yesterday by disposing of a very large number of amendments. Today, we hope to work through the remaining amendments, and it is possible that we could finish the bill this evening. The chairman and ranking member are expected to line up additional rollecall votes throughout today, and we will alert Senators as those votes are scheduled.

The majority leader has mentioned several appropriations conference reports that are available or soon will be available. We expect to consider the foreign operations conference report today or tomorrow and will vote on the remaining bills as we can clear them for action in the Senate.

Having said that, Mr. President, we look forward to further progress on the Defense authorization bill during the day.
I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME
The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS
The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MINIMIZING DAMAGE FROM STORMS
Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I would like to spend a few minutes this morning speaking about a subject that is extremely important to the State I represent, the State of Louisiana, and to the gulf coast and also to call attention to a small but important victory we achieved this week that I hope will signal a turning or a course correction that Congress should take to help prevent the destruction we have seen on the gulf coast in the last several weeks.

Mr. President, you are from Kansas, and you know the power of tornadoes and Mother Nature. There is not anything we can do to prevent the fury of nature, but we can minimize the damage. We most certainly can use our intelligence that God has given us and our talent that God has given us and the wisdom that He gives us to make wise investments and smart choices and try to set priorities that help us make good choices for the people we represent so that we can minimize their pain and their suffering and we
can maximize their hopes and their dreams for the future. I believe that is why we are here. I know I have talked with you personally, Mr. President, about the reasons you came to the Senate and I came to the Senate, and I think most of our colleagues share that view.

I wish to speak for a few minutes this morning to remind the Nation and my colleagues about the devastation and the destruction that occurred only 10 weeks ago in the two metropolitan areas in the United States of America, and that is the city of New Orleans and the surrounding parishes.

New Orleans is our largest city in Louisiana, with 450,000 people, but it site right next to Jefferson Parish of 450,000, right next to St. Bernard parish of about 60,000, and right next to Plaquemine, which is about 30,000. So it is a metropolitan area of close to 1.5 million to 2 million people.

We are currently in the history of the Nation seen destruction such as this. It is unprecedented. It was not, we now know and as I said 2 days after the hurricanes, the hurricanes that got us, Katrina and Rita—a double hit, one to the southeastern part of our State, a catastrophic one to the city of New Orleans and its surrounding areas and by our own failures, if you will, that got us stuck. It was the breaching of a levee system that has successfully protected this city for over 300 years. But because of a lack of investment, indeed, we have not set the right priorities in the last several years and over some time, and because we have our focus abroad and not at home, this is the destruction that has occurred, not just in New Orleans but in the region, in the south-western part of our State as well, and throughout the gulf coast of Mississippi.

Let me show another chart that does not have the same kind of picture, but in a more graphic form it shows the number of people who have been affected by this storm and the breaching of the levee systems which occurred throughout south Louisiana primarily.

Not many levees were breached to the north, but there were levee systems that were breached. In Louisiana, 3 million people were affected; in Texas, 802,000; in Mississippi, 1.7 million; and in Alabama, 829,000 people. Six million people were hit directly by a storm. Again, Katrina and Rita could not have been avoided, but I promise you, Mr. President, we could have minimized the damage and maximized hope if we had set better priorities and invested our money better right in this Congress with a different choice, a different course than the one set by this administration. What do I mean by that? I will get to that in a minute.

I also want to show the significance of this region. There were 6 million people affected in this region, but I am not just any region in the country. Forgive me, I represent this area, so I am quite partial to it. I do know every other area of this country is spectacular and wonderful, and I have visited many places, but I think anybody looking at this chart can understand there is something special about Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama.

What is special about it is we are the Nation’s energy coast. Much of our domestic production comes off the shores, basically, of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Yes, we have some important production in the West in shallow plays of oil and gas, but we have virtually shut down drilling in other parts of the country by my opinion, not on very good data, but nonetheless, that is a choice that has been made.

The point is that we have continued to supply this Nation at a time when it needs oil and gas and needs energy production. Louisiana has not sat down on the job, Texas has not sat down, Mississippi has not sat down, and Alabama has not sat down. But what has happened in this administration and some parts of this Congress sat down on the job of helping Louisiana and this energy coast protect itself from the kinds of storms that we have seen.

How? By not investing in the wetlands restoration, which serves as a protective buffer and their buying back land in New Orleans and its surrounding areas by not investing in the critical infrastructure of levees and navigation channels and appropriate dredging that would help manage water. Water is not a force; it is a powerful force for good. You can see here the mighty Mississippi River. Our country, in large measure, became a nation because of the securing of the mouth of the Mississippi River, the Louisiana Purchase by President Jefferson—when he made a very smart strategic investment. He did not waste his money on things that would not return a benefit to our country, but made the Louisiana Purchase for 3 cents an acre, the best real estate deal in history. He purchased the mouth of this river, secured it for national security but also secured it for commerce.

Mr. President, it is impossible to get grain out of Kansas, your State, or Nebraska, or throughout the great Farm Belt in the Midwest of the United States, without using the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Yes, we can manage to get some of it over here to the east coast and out to our trading partners to the east, but moving it out by air or by rail is not a cost effective way of doing it.

When he purchased and invested in “conservation.” This is not conservation. This is akin to taking a gun and shooting yourself in the head, when you take money out of civil works projects, away from cities, away from suburbs, away from communities, and spend it on either tax cuts for people who do not need them or on other priorities that are not as important or on wars that we cannot win. It is this low line here, right down here to the lowest percentage, we have under one-half of 1 percent of the GDP, that results in devastation such as this.

You do not have to have a Ph.D. in economics to understand this. This is not complicated. I am going to show it to you again. This is 20 years of disinvestment, disengagement, pretending that these problems do not exist, pretending we have surpluses when we do not, and underfund critical infrastructure. When that happens, this is the result.

The 450,000 people who lived in the city of New Orleans at one time and the 450,000 people who lived in Jefferson Parish and the 200,000 people who lived in St. Tammany Parish and the 60,000 people who lived in St. Bernard and the 30,000 people who lived in Plaquemines Parish—and that is not mentioning the other parishes along the western part of our coast, Cameron, that is completely destroyed, and Calcasieu Parish, that suffered, and the other Parishes. You can imagine every tree fall but every house collapsed or destroyed in some way or affected in some way by the falling of the trees—

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ask these people whom I represent, was it smart to cut off investments? I don’t think so.

The sad thing is, we have had an answer. I am not coming to complain. I am coming to offer a solution which our colleagues have offered, novel after novel, for years. We have held hearings, we have had field trips to Louisiana, we have done fly-overs, we have formed a national alliance, we have built a coalition of 4,500, an alliance of industry and environmentalists. We have done it all. But what we cannot seem to do is get the attention of this administration and enough members of the Republican leadership to understand that smart investments make a difference: They save lives, they build communities, and they make a nation stronger. What I have asked for and my delegation has done is get the attention of this administration to redirect a portion of those revenues that have been generated off of our coast, off of this coast where all these people have been injured.

There it is. With the oil and gas being drilled—and has been drilled since 2005—off of this coast, we are generating about $6 billion a year that comes into the general fund. It would be a smart thing and a wise thing right now, a wise action and a smart action, to redirect a portion of those revenues to instead of spending those revenues on the restoration of this Gulf Coast area and the wetlands that protect the Nation’s great energy port and trade port.

That is my message. We can do better. We must do better. We must make smarter investments with the money that is in the National Treasury. We do not have to raise additional taxes to do this. We have to redirect some of the taxes already flowing into the Treasury to invest in protecting the people along this coast, and growing the coast. We share those revenues with other coastal communities—since by the year 2020, two-thirds of the continental United States will live within 50 miles of the coast—we most certainly are able to do that. But for Heaven’s sake, let’s get our priorities straight.

We can do better. We can make better decisions. That is what this effort is about. We are going to continue on, not complaining but offering solutions. We are not offering to raise taxes but to redirect some of the taxes that we have to make better choices to build a stronger Nation and stronger communities. I ask my colleagues to join us in this effort because I know we can get this job done. I thank the Senator from Illinois for a leading system in the restoration of this Gulf Coast area, the Senator from Louisiana for a leading system in the restoration of this Gulf Coast area, and the Senator from Illinois for a leading system in the restoration of this Gulf Coast area. The Senator from Louisiana shares my belief that if we had an independent, nonpartisan commission—which we have been begging for for weeks now—to take a look at what happened, not so much that we can figure out who to blame but so that we can make sure we never do it again. We hear complaints about FEMA—a few weeks ago in Florida and complaints in Texas. We can do better. When it comes to disasters facing America, natural and otherwise, we can do better. I think we need to come together in an independent, nonpartisan way to make that happen.

AHMED CHALABI

It is almost hard to believe, and impossible to explain, that coming in Washington today as we honor and fetes Ahmed Chalabi. Who is Ahmed Chalabi? He enjoys the rank of Deputy Prime Minister in the nation of Iraq. But he enjoys a very questionable reputation otherwise. Ahmed Chalabi, it turns out, was one of the key advisers to the Bush administration before the invasion of Iraq. He was so important to the Bush administration that they paid his organization, through the disastrous Intelligence Agency, $335,000 a month to sustain his life and his office. Overall, the Bush White House gave his Iraqi National Congress $39 million over the last 5 years. $39 million to this Ahmed Chalabi. Ahmed Chalabi is an expatriate from Iraq, now returned with Saddam Hussein being removed from power, and he has been bankrolled by our Government as long as President Bush has been in office. His Iraqi National Congress office was a major source of misinformation and disinformation about the situation in Iraq before our invasion. He was the one who was producing the evidence that led the administration to tell the American people there were weapons of mass destruction.

There were people who were skeptical of Ahmed Chalabi from the start. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell said, on June 12, 2003, “I can’t substantiate Chalabi’s claims. He makes new ones every year.”

This skepticism was shared by other agencies of our Government, but it did not stop the leaders of our Government, under President Bush, from bringing Ahmed Chalabi into the highest level meetings concerning America’s national security and our policies in Iraq. On September 18, 2001, Richard Perle convened a 2-day meeting of the Defense Policy Board, a group that advises the Pentagon. Chalabi, who was a guest speaker at this meeting, made a presentation on the threat from Iraq. It turns out that Chalabi was producing information from so-called defectors on a regular basis to the highest levels of the Bush administration—most of which turned out to be false.

Chalabi’s defector reports were . . . flowing from the Pentagon directly to the Vice-President’s office [Mr. Cheney] and then on to the President, with little prior evaluation by intelligence professionals.

That statement was made by State Department intelligence expert Greg Thielmann in the New Yorker. He went on to say:

There was considerable skepticism throughout the intelligence community about the reliability of Chalabi’s sources, but the defector reports were coming all the time. Knock one down and another comes along. Meanwhile, the Pentagon, Chalabi, who was being shoved straight to the President.

Ahmed Chalabi was the source of this so-called intelligence garbage about the situation in Iraq.

And then there was the notorious source named “Curve Ball.”

He should have been given that name because his information turned out to be so wrong, so bad, and so misleading. He was another one of the so-called defectors who provided this information. He was a discredited ING defector to Germany, code named “Curve Ball,” and the chief source of information on Iraq’s supposed fleet of mobile germ weapons factories which turned out to be a hoax. “Curve Ball” was the brother of a top lieutenant to Ahmed Chalabi.

Chalabi did not stop with reaching the highest levels of our Government and misleading them about the situation in Iraq. He had his friends in the
media. Chalabi was the source of discredited news stories about Iraq, penned by New York Times reporter Judith Miller. In 2001, Miller wrote a front-page story about claims that Saddam had 20 secret WMD sites hidden in Iraq. It is amazing, the exclusive story Miller did just three days after the source had shown deception in a polygraph test administered by the CIA at the request of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

So when they confronted Ahmad Chalabi and asked, how could you mislead the United States with all of this bad information, leading to our invasion of Iraq, 160,000 American soldiers risking their lives, over 2,000 killed, he said “we are heroes in error.” He boasted to the international media that even if he had misled the United States, he had achieved his goal. He got the United States to invade Iraq and deport Saddam Hussein.

And then what happened? The tables turned on Mr. Ahmad Chalabi last year. In May of last year, the Iraqi officials, with the cooperation of the United States, raided Ahmad Chalabi’s offices in Iraq. Why? I will tell you. In June 2004 Chalabi came under investigation for allegations that he passed secret intelligence data to Iran. Remember Iran, one of the axes of evil? Chalabi is accused of telling the Iranian Government that the United States had broken the code it used for secret communications. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice promised Congress a full investigation into these allegations.

The Wall Street Journal reports:

There is little sign of progress in a Federal investigation of allegations that Chalabi once leaked United States intelligence secrets to Iran.

If he did this, it is clear he endangered the lives of our troops, he endangered national security.

Just this week, the Wall Street Journal came out with a story about Ahmad Chalabi. They went to the FBI and said some 18 months later, what is the status of Ahmad Chalabi? Let me quote FBI spokesman John Miller, who strongly denied that the Chalabi investigation is languished. He said:

This is currently an open investigation and an active investigation.

He added:

Numerous current and former government employees have been interviewed.

Here we have a man who misled the leaders of our Government. Here we have a man who conceded and boasted that although he misled them, he achieved his purpose of getting the United States to invade Iraq. Here we have a man accused of selling secrets to the enemy, to Iran, and endangering American troops. And where do we find Ahmad Chalabi today? He is being hosted and feted by this administration. This man is in Washington with his motorcade moving around town, hosted and feted by this administration, being praised for his appraisals of the situation in Iraq. I am glad I was here as he gave one of his appraisals of the situation in Iraq. As Paul Harvey often says, I would like to provide the rest of the story; arguably, a more balanced view of what is going on in that very important country.

In fact, freedom has taken another giant step forward in Iraq. On October 15 the Iraqi people voted overwhelmingly to ratify their Constitution. Iraqis turned out in stunning numbers to embrace democracy, tolerance, and a just rule under our law. In fact, they turned out in greater numbers than we turned out here last November, which was a very high turnout by U.S. standards—and, of course, most Americans were not afraid they would get shot when they went to the polls.

Iraqis created a constitutional republic in the heart of the Middle East. This is an unequivocal victory in the war on terror. It is the only way we can assess it. With their votes, millions of brave Iraqis rejected dictatorship and created a republic. They rejected rule by fear and terror and embraced rule by the consent of the governed. They stood together as a country under one motto: “we the people.”

Nearly 10 million Iraqis turned out to vote, a turnout rate of 63 percent. That