

I think we need a victim's rights amendment to our Constitution. Over the last 40 years liberal judges have turned our Constitution into the "Criminal Protection Act." The purpose of the last 40 years is to make sure that every criminal is coddled, pampered, and looked after in a very proper manner. It is time for it to stop, and the Constitution has to protect victims as well.

Mr. President, I know that many Senators share what I am talking about and are frustrated by what we see. I think we need to start on legal reform, and I think we do need to do it soon.

The first thing that will be said is, "If you start it, the President will veto it." Well, let him veto it. I think the American people need to know where the President stands. So if he wants to veto it, let him do it. If the President says that the regular people of this country—or if he chooses sides with Ivy League lawyers that never got a murder case that they couldn't appeal, it is time to bring the practicality and the common sense of the American people into the legal system and take it out of the hands of the lawyers. The very idea of \$50 million to defend McVeigh—\$50 million, 14 lawyers. Anybody who would tell me that that isn't an absolutely out-of-control system simply has lost all common sense themselves.

It is time we put an end to it. I intend to introduce legislation that will do so.

Mr. President, I thank you. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. AL-LARD). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would like to start by using my own 5 minutes and at the end of that time go into leader time. If the Presiding Officer will indicate to me when I have consumed the 5 minutes, I will be grateful for that.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will notify the Senator.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Chair.

THE DISASTER IN NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise again today to report to my colleagues on the developing disaster in the State of North Dakota. As I reported to my colleagues yesterday, we were hit last weekend with the most powerful winter storm in over 50 years. We are a State that is accustomed to tough storms. But, frankly, we have never seen one quite like this. Mr. President, this storm came on top of the worst flooding threat in 150 years. So we have a double whammy of a powerful winter storm, dumping record amounts of snowfall, in addition to an underlying threat of massive flooding, because before this storm hit North Dakota, we were faced with a record snowfall in the State of North Dakota, over 100 inches of snow, before we got dumped

on with another anywhere from 17 to 24 inches in the eastern part of our State.

As the paper of my hometown reported, "A Doozy of a Record"—record snowfall they are talking about. It is maybe hard to see on the chart here. But what they are showing is a major shopping center. These are cars, or I guess more accurately they are the tops of cars. That is how deep the snow was in my hometown.

That is not the only place that has been hit. It is across the State of North Dakota. This is from the largest city in our State, Fargo, ND. The headline there is "The Worst of Two Seasons." They are talking about the blizzard on top of the flood.

Mr. President, this is a truly staggering set of circumstances that the people of my State are having to cope with. Just this morning I was called by the head of the Corps of Engineers for our district, who informed me that although all of the predictions were dire, they have now become even worse.

As of this morning the National Weather Service is telling us that the forecasted crest, instead of being 37½ feet in the city of Fargo, our major town in North Dakota, it has now been raised to 39 to 39½. Already we are faced with the worst flood in 150 years. We were told this morning that this is the 500-year flood level. Of course, the dikes were built to accommodate the earlier projections at 37½ feet. So the dikes were built to 39½ feet. Now we are told the forecasted crest is 39 to 39½ feet.

Mr. President, this could be a calamitous situation. They are telling us that the crest will be reached late tomorrow or perhaps early Friday.

I have talked to the Corps of Engineers. They are working feverishly to add to the dikes that have already been constructed not only in Fargo but right up the Red River Valley—in Harwood and Grand Forks, ND—to try in a race against the clock to build these dikes high enough to protect the people and the property that is around this river.

Mr. President, this is the most heavily populated part of my State. The disaster that is unfolding is truly staggering in proportion.

Early Saturday 80,000 people were without power, with wind chills of 40 below zero. Can you imagine being an elderly person in a home being faced with the most powerful winter storm in 50 years without heat? That is what is happening in my State. Although great progress is being made because of a really heroic effort by people to respond, still today 20,000 people are without power and without heat, most of them since Saturday.

Today temperatures outside are hovering near zero in North Dakota, and even more threatening, temperatures inside these homes that are without heat ranging between 30 and 40 degrees. Not only is the human condition being put under great stress but also livestock has been put under grave stress

in our State. Thousands of cattle are dead.

I was told yesterday of a ranching family that brought 10 of their calves into their home to try to give them protection, and allow them to live. All 10 of them died. The cattle were dying because the wind was so ferocious that it blew the snow up into their nostrils and they suffocated. They can't get to many cattle to feed them because of the snowdrifts that are everywhere.

Mr. President, I thought I would share with my colleagues just some of the individual stories that tell the depths of this tragedy.

A young man froze to death in his pickup when it became stranded only 1 mile from the small town of Lankin, ND.

One family that is stranded in its farmhouse due to overland flooding is burning its fence posts to keep warm. The water around their house was iced over, so neither emergency vehicles nor boats were able to rescue them. Another family was forced to snag logs that drifted by in flood waters to heat their home.

The Turtle Mountain band of Chippewas has snowdrifts of up to 15 feet. Can you imagine a snowdrift of 15 feet that is blocking transportation? In fact, emergency crews needed 4 hours to get to a man who had a heart attack.

A man from Wilton, ND, went on the radio in search of hip-length waders so that he could wade out to rescue 120 sheep that are caught up in the flood waters.

An elderly couple was trapped inside their home due to a 6-inch layer of ice that had formed over their doors and windows; trapped in their own home because ice had formed around the doors and windows and they could not get out. An emergency rescue team was sent in to rescue them.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 5 minutes are up.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Chair for informing me. If we could now go on with leader time, I would appreciate that.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 10 minutes.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, a family in northeastern North Dakota—two parents and their 7-year-old—has been without power since Saturday with snowdrifts trapping them in their home. They had to sleep huddled in the hallway to keep warm.

Seventy-five people have been stuck in the basement of the Hebron city hall because their cars were pulled off of the major highway going by as that road became impassable. Those 75 people have been stuck there since Saturday.

Officials in Cass County, the most populous county of our State, are having difficulty responding to emergency calls because the water surrounding many homes is frozen. So they can't get there by wheel vehicles and they can't get there by boat. There is no

way to get to people in order to extricate them.

Mr. President, there has been a tremendous response, not only by volunteers in our State but also by the agencies attempting to cope with this disaster.

I want today to thank the President for responding so quickly in declaring our State a Presidentially declared disaster. This is our second Presidentially declared disaster of this year. We are only in the fourth month of this year. We already had a Presidentially declared disaster because of the record amounts of snowfall. Now on top of that we are anticipating a record flood.

These are truly difficult times for our State. Many homes are still without power. We need generators and fuel to heat homes, make certain that essential services are up and operating. My State needs special heavy equipment to clear snow and ice from roads to allow for emergency access.

This is a snowfall that is unlike any we have seen because it happened with a freezing rain and then snowfall, and so the snowpack that is there is like concrete. That is what the people who are out there trying to fight this mess are telling us. They have never seen a snowpack like this. We had rain on top of snow, it froze, and it is like concrete trying to break through these incredible snowdrifts.

I also want to recognize FEMA and the capable administrator there, James Lee Witt, who is coming to my State tomorrow. FEMA has responded marvelously to the needs in North Dakota. I also wish to thank the Corps of Engineers that is involved in a really heroic effort. Some of these people have been working around the clock with no sleep for days attempting to build these dikes higher as the flood crest forecasts keep increasing.

I just want to say on behalf of the people of my State how much we appreciate the extraordinary response of the Corps of Engineers and of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

I would also like to thank the president of Manitoba Hydro, Bob Brennan. We were alerted by the Governor; they were having trouble getting people across our border. We got the Immigration and Naturalization Service to provide an immediate 2-week waiver on all of their requirements at the border. We talked to Manitoba Hydro and they committed to sending 100 people to our State to help rebuild the transmission facilities. Now, that is real neighborliness, and we appreciate very much that our neighbor to the north has responded in this most generous way of sending 100 people to help us rebuild the transmission facilities in our State.

I would also like to thank the Internal Revenue Service. This is something we rarely do. They have indicated that they would practice forbearance on our individual income tax payers in the State of North Dakota by allowing them to file by May 30 without late

payment penalties. They will be asked to pay interest on the money during the period that they would have paid, but they are being given until May 30. If they file and if they pay by that date, they will not be hit by any late-payment penalties. I am told that they are applying this same standard to every State and every county that receives a Presidentially declared disaster in the face of what is happening in many parts of the country.

We struggle to find good news in all of this, hopeful news. But I can tell you there is good news and there is hopeful news, and that is the spirit of the people. In North Dakota, we say we have a yes, we can attitude, and that is exactly what we have seen in coping with these disasters. As one emergency official said to me, Senator, I have seen blizzards; I have seen floods; I have seen power outages, but I have never seen all three together at the same time.

That is what we are coping with in North Dakota. I must say that can-do spirit has served us well. Not only do North Dakotans show that spirit, but I must say these Federal agencies that have come to help are also showing that spirit, and we deeply appreciate it.

I thank the Chair and yield back the remainder of my time.

I yield the floor. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

DISASTER RELIEF FOR MINNESOTA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, the President has now declared a major disaster in my home State, Minnesota, and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in areas hard hit by severe flooding, severe winter storms, snow melt, high winds, rain and ice. And this all continues. The declaration will make funds available for grants, disaster housing and low-interest loans to cover uninsured damaged property and other aid to help residents, businesses and local governments cope with ongoing storm and flood damage.

I am pleased by the swift action taken by the emergency management division of the Department of Public Safety in Minnesota. Jim Franklin and his hard-working staff, very hard-working staff are to be commended for their efforts. I am very pleased with the action taken by the Federal Government as well.

I think James Lee Witt is one of the greatest employments ever made by any President. He has been so responsive to all of us in this country when

citizens in our States are faced with these very difficult and painful crises. I do not think crisis is an exaggeration.

I am also really pleased with the way in which SBA, the Small Business Administration, has been so responsive.

Today, I will be requesting \$50 million in additional energy assistance, the LIHEAP program, to help families who will soon be returning to their homes only to find their heating systems have been damaged. These are individuals with low income, many of them elderly, many of them families with children, who, because of the severe cold we have had all winter, have already had a very difficult time paying their heating bills. This aid is desperately needed. Many waterways in our State are already at record water levels. The Minnesota River is threatening to totally overrun many cities along its border. Record flood conditions are being predicted along the Red River, which is expected to crest within the next few days.

Along the Red River there are still ice and snowpacks which will be melting in the coming days and weeks, further threatening communities already under siege in northwestern Minnesota, and flood conditions continue to build along the Mississippi River as well, cresting any day now.

Some communities have already been hit and are under water and ice. In the town of Ada, nearly all the 1,000 residents have been forced to evacuate, including residents of a nursing home who had to be rescued by the National Guard. And, thank you, National Guard, for all of your fine work. Many of these people had little or no time to pack their belongings before fleeing. And when they return, little will likely be salvageable.

In Appleton, ice floe broke through the levee, and the river now has surged 21.5 feet in one-half hour, forcing a massive volunteer effort to halt the flow of surging water and further prevent housing damage. The Pomme de Terre River—let me repeat that—has surged 21.5 feet in just one-half hour.

The record flooding and cold temperatures have had a major impact on Minnesota. There have been widespread power outages throughout parts of the State, and with the flooding and the cold, emergency repair crews are unable to get to the affected areas. Many farmers are having trouble farming, and it is going to be a very, very difficult spring planting season.

I am very pleased, again, that FEMA Director James Lee Witt has done so much and will be coming to Minnesota to see firsthand the devastation. I believe he will be coming to South Dakota and North Dakota as well. As a Senator from Minnesota, I express my sympathy to Senators from the Dakotas. Of course, we will all work together.

I have been touched by the sense of community among many people in Minnesota. Many folks do not care who they are working next to as long as