

with a fireman up to his waist in water. This is a downtown street. He is fighting a fire that consumed an entire city block. Firefighters, experiencing hypothermia, in ice-cold sewage-infested water—because the sewers backed up throughout the city, and the system collapsed—were trying to fight a fire without equipment. A fireman named Randy said, "Normally, when we fight a fire, water is our ally. In this case, we did not have water to pump." They tried to fight fires in multistory buildings, standing up to their waist in water in some cases, with fire extinguishers. What a valiant and heroic effort they made. But of course this city was inundated.

I and some others have been in the downtown area of this city in a boat. One boat I was in, operated by the Coast Guard, ran into a car—ran over the hood of the car. The only thing you could see of the car was 2 inches of the radio antenna sticking above the water. That is how we knew the boat hit a car on a downtown street so deep with the water.

The reason I come to the floor to show you these pictures and to tell you about the people of my region is that it is important, as we have done in every other disaster—earthquakes, floods, fire, and tornadoes—to extend a helping hand by the American people to this region to say we know what is happening to you and we want to help you. You are not alone. The rest of the country extends a helping hand to try to help you through this crisis.

It is not about buildings and snowbanks. It is about little boys, about grandpas and grandmas, about wage earners, working couples. A little boy, 7 years old, sitting in front of an airplane hangar at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, lost his home, and was looking at the ground dejected when I came to him and visited the shelter where thousands of people had been evacuated. The little boy knew his home was under water and he had nowhere to go. Not much hope. Eyes filled with tears. An older woman named Vi, a wonderful woman, a wonderful woman, on the phone when I met her, calling FEMA for help. Her eyes were filled with tears talking about what she had lost. So many others who have lost so much. Everything they have built, everything they have invested in, everything they have saved, inundated and devastated by a flood that came and stayed.

This region is just now finally beginning to start thinking about rebuilding. I was on the phone half an hour ago with a fellow who just got into his home and is pumping out his basement and trying to assess the damage.

Now, we have an opportunity in this Congress to pass a bill called a disaster supplemental appropriations bill. We have done that in the past. I, from North Dakota, have been pleased to vote for and support disaster supplemental appropriations for people who have been victims of earthquakes,

floods, fires and tornadoes across this country because I think we need to say to them, "We offer hope, we want to help."

Let me say, as the Appropriations Committee begins this process, I am enormously grateful for the chairman and the ranking member of that committee, Senator STEVENS and Senator BYRD, and so many other members of the committee who have worked diligently on this issue and worked with us and cooperated in a manner that one can only hope for. Thanks to them, thanks for the wonderful work they have done in order to put together a supplemental appropriations bill. We need to do much more because we do not know the entire extent of the damages. In the coming days, we will continue to work to do much more, to add money for the community development block grants, EDA and others, so we continue to appreciate very much the cooperation of the chairman and the ranking members and others on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. President, I am worried now because we were told this morning that there are some who want to add four very controversial amendments having nothing at all to do with floods, fires, winter storms, and disaster. They want to add four very controversial amendments to this disaster supplemental bill. When President Clinton came to North Dakota last week, one of the things he said is, "Let us pass a disaster supplemental bill, let the Federal Government extend a helping hand, and let us make sure that no one in Congress is tempted to add extraneous or unrelated amendments that would hold it up." Well, I worry now, because what we were told this morning is that there are those who want to add four amendments, all very controversial, all of them or any of which could trip up this bill. Those people, with tears in their eyes but hope in their hearts because they feel that we are going to extend a helping hand, do not, do not, do not deserve to have anyone meddle with this kind of legislation.

Let us, all of us, decide when disaster strikes, when tragedy visits any region of this country, any group of Americans, that we must rise as one to say, "Let us help. You are not alone. Let us be there with you." That is what this bill is.

Again, I started by saying I so much appreciate the cooperation of the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator STEVENS, the ranking member, Senator BYRD, and so many others, especially the staff and others, who worked so hard on this kind of legislation. Our job now is to get it up, out, and moving and get it to the President and get it signed and get the help moving to these folks in this region of the country to say to them, "We want to help you rebuild. We want to help in your recovery. We want to help you rebuild your dreams, your hopes. We want to help your family recover." That is our responsibility. That

is our requirement. Let us not, any of us, let us not be tempted to decide that this is an opportunity to meddle with some kind of amendment that has nothing to do, at all, with disaster and tragedy.

I, today, call on all of my colleagues, each and every one of my colleagues, to decide this disaster supplemental bill ought to be passed, we ought to pass it soon, and we ought to get it signed into law to offer help and hope to those people who have suffered so much. If there are those who have other agendas, there is time, plenty of time, to address those agendas—the next day, next week, the next month. There is plenty of opportunity to bring any idea, any amendment, any agenda they have, to the floor of the Senate. But do not load this supplemental appropriations bill with extraneous and unrelated controversial amendments that will either stop or slow down the help that we intend to send on the way to the victims of this disaster.

I hope in these coming hours, as we talk through the issues that were discussed this morning, proposed amendments to the supplemental appropriations bill, I hope that all of us in this Chamber will come to the same result: Passing a disaster appropriations bill, a supplemental bill, to respond to this disaster is critically important. It ought to be done and done now, without anyone in this Chamber using it as an opportunity to advance an agenda that has nothing to do with the disaster supplemental bill. I call on my colleagues for that level of cooperation. I thank all of them for their help. The people I represent in this region of the country will be enormously grateful for what this Congress will do in extending a helping hand to people who have suffered so much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

WASHINGTON STATE AND CHINA

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an issue of tremendous importance to Washington State and the Nation. The issue is China and specifically, my trip to both Hong Kong and Beijing over the recent Easter recess.

My trip to Hong Kong and China was an opportunity for me to discuss candidly the issues to be confronted by the United States Senate; most-favored-nation trade status for China, the World Trade Organization, Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty, the trade imbalance between the United States and China, my personal concerns on human rights, and numerous other issues.

Additionally, I took this trip intent on raising the profile of Washington State in both Hong Kong and China. In the early 1950's, Senator Warren Magnuson of the State of Washington whose seat I now occupy was the first United States Senator to promote closer ties between the United States and China.

Since that time, Washington State has led the way in advancing United States-China relations for both the American and Chinese people. No other State in the country is as engaged and involved in China as my State. We have strong trade and cultural ties to China and indeed to all of Asia.

Washington State's involvement in China is much deeper than trade and economics; educators and students, lawyers and judges, adoptive families, religious organizations, military personnel, and many others in my State have relationships across the Pacific with counterparts in China.

Several Washington cities including Tacoma, Seattle, Kent, and Spokane all have growing sister city relationships with cities or counties in China. Washingtonians are going to great lengths to foster change in China; participating in local elections, providing resources to counter cultural biases against young girls, and working with the Chinese to create a commercial and a civil legal system for that country.

A diverse group of Washington State interests traveled with me to China at their own expense. This group included representatives from agriculture, aviation, high technology, retail, financial services, heavy machinery, and ports.

In Hong Kong, we met with officials from the United States Consulate, the American Chamber of Commerce, the Hong Kong Government and others. On the street and in official meetings, I sought to determine the mood of the people of this British Colony as it speeds toward its new status as a Special Administrative Region of China.

Certainly there are concerns about the transition; concerns that we require the careful oversight of the United States and others who care about the Hong Kong way of life. I also found much optimism among Hong Kong's people and its leaders; a certain confidence that the people of Hong Kong will take it upon themselves to preserve the prosperous and beautiful enclave that they created from barren rock and the surrounding waters.

I particularly enjoyed a meeting with Ms. Sophie Leung, an appointed member of the Provisional Legislature that will replace the current Legislative Council following the transition. Though I question China's decision to replace the current democratically elected legislature, I was heartened by Ms. Leung's passion for Hong Kong, her background as a civic activist, and her intention to support and participate in upcoming direct elections. Ms. Leung is also a part-time resident of Washington State. Interestingly, a number of the leaders selected to govern Hong Kong following the transition are actually American citizens.

Like many in this body, I am following closely the transition and China's handling of the new Special Administrative Region. A heavy handed approach to the transition by the Chinese side will be disastrous for Hong Kong; disastrous for the mainland whose de-

velopment is largely funded by and through Hong Kong; and disastrous for Pacific oriented States like Washington which utilize Hong Kong as a gateway to China and other parts of Asia.

Mindful of the threats to Hong Kong, it is important for all who want to influence change in China to recognize that Hong Kong's transition may be our best opportunity to further influence the mainland in such important areas like the rule of law, respect for individual rights, and the many democratic principles that we cherish in the United States.

As I traveled from Hong Kong to Beijing for additional discussions, I couldn't help but wonder which side would have a greater impact following the transition; 1.2 billion Chinese scattered throughout an area the size of the United States or 6 million Hong Kong capitalists occupying land that is similar in size to the Puget Sound area in Washington State.

In Beijing, I met with China's Vice Premier, Chinese Trade Ministry officials, and Chinese leaders involved in financial services, transportation, agriculture, electronics, and aviation.

United States Ambassador Jim Sasser, our former Senate colleague, was particularly gracious and giving of his time and experiences in China to me and the Washington State delegation. Ambassador Sasser hosted a dinner for me and the Washington delegation, and our group was delighted to be joined for the evening by former Speaker Tom Foley. At my suggestion, Ambassador Sasser invited a number of prominent Chinese women known for their advocacy work within China on issues relating to women and children.

In my meeting with Vice Premier Li Lanqing, I focussed on the trade imbalance between the United States and China, my concerns and those of my constituents on human rights, and the importance of China abiding by its commitments on Hong Kong.

Washington State exports to China grew by almost 40 percent in 1996 but overall United States exports to China did not grow at a rate comparable to the growth of China's exports to the United States.

I stressed to the Vice Premier my hope that the Chinese side would soon agree to allow the International Red Cross access to Chinese prisons and reinforced with him that the United States would continue to push for improvements in human rights. A commitment to human rights is part of our moral fabric; and I was encouraged by Vice Premier's acknowledgment of U.S. interest in this issue and of his offer to engage in a dialog on this issue.

Hong Kong's transition will clearly be the international event of 1997. The Chinese are well aware of this; I reminded the Chinese that the United States is watching closely; Taiwan is watching; indeed all of the world is watching China's handling of the Hong Kong transition.

In China, I had the opportunity to raise a number of other issues of importance to my State and my constituents. I encouraged the Chinese to increase access to their markets for Washington State goods with particular emphasis on resolving the TCK smut issue which keeps Northwest wheat out of China's marketplace and tariff reductions which would allow our horticultural producers to export significant volumes of apples, cherries, and pears to China.

The Chinese have made progress in combating piracy of intellectual property rights; I reminded them of ongoing problems and our continued interest in stopping both the production and export of pirated United States technology.

With the People's Bank of China, we discussed the importance of allowing more United States banks and insurance companies the opportunity to operate in China. This will provide new opportunities for small- and medium-sized firms seeking export to China.

We also discussed many other important issues including the growth of the Internet in China, the competitive advantages of Washington's ports and transportation infrastructure, the future energy needs of China, food security issues including China's ability to feed its people, problems associated with large, unproductive state-owned enterprises, and growth patterns in coastal and rural parts of China.

Numerous other high-profile congressional delegations also traveled throughout China and to Hong Kong during the recess. Vice President GORE visited the region with stops in Beijing and Shanghai. Several of my Senate colleagues including Senators LIEBERMAN, MACK, and JEFFORDS traveled to China during the recess as did Speaker GINGRICH and a large number of House Members. United States policy makers are visiting China and Hong Kong in record numbers. Close to 100 Members of Congress have visited China in the last few months. And more will follow as the Hong Kong return to Chinese sovereignty is now less than 100 days away.

I returned from my first visit to China convinced of the importance of engaging the Chinese, with heightened awareness of the difficult issues in the United States-China relationship, and very encouraged by the congressional interest in Asia and China. And I am certain Washington State will continue to be the bellwether State in gauging both the rewards and the pitfalls of the important United States-China relationship.

Already there is significant interest in the Nation's Capital in China. It is my hope that this interest will manifest itself in a genuine debate about good U.S. policy rather than good partisan politics. I certainly intend to represent forcefully the interests of my State and our country with a voice for good U.S. policy in the coming months.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KENNEDY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I believe that, under the previous agreement, I was going to have 8 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. I understood that the other side has some 22 minutes left.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. They have 26 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. That would bring us to the hour of 12:30. I have consulted with the floor manager of the legislation.

I ask unanimous consent that the recess time be extended from 12:30 until 12:40 and that the time therein be divided equally between the manager and Senator LEAHY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized then for 7 minutes and that Senator HARKIN and Senator WELLSTONE each be recognized for 3 minutes each.

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

SUPPORTING THE CONFIRMATION OF ALEXIS M. HERMAN FOR SECRETARY OF LABOR

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I continue to be concerned about the failure of the Senate to act on the nomination of Alexis Herman to be the Secretary of Labor. President Clinton announced his intention to nominate Ms. Herman on December 20 last year, over 4 months ago. Her papers were officially received by the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources in early January.

During the Labor Committee's review of the nomination, Ms. Herman answered over 150 written questions from committee members. She dealt thoroughly with all the questions put to her at a lengthy Labor Committee hearing on March 18. The committee voted unanimously to confirm Ms. Herman on April 10. Senate confirmation was expected soon after that.

Instead, Ms. Herman's nomination has become a hostage in an exercise of political extortion that discredits the Senate. Those who are holding this nomination hostage admit that they are postponing a vote on Ms. Herman for reasons that have nothing to do with her qualifications for office. They object to President Clinton's intention to issue an Executive order on labor issues which they oppose. The proposed Executive order would direct Federal agencies to consider the use of so-called project labor agreements [PLA's] on Federal construction projects.

Such agreements have been used on large-scale construction projects, in the public and private sectors, for decades. Examples of Federal projects car-

ried out under PLA's include the Grand Coulee Dam in the 1930's; atomic energy plants in the 1940's; Cape Kennedy in the 1960's; and today, the Boston Harbor cleanup project.

In the private sector, too, PLA's have been used on many projects across the Nation, including the construction of Disney World in Florida, the Toyota plant in Georgetown, KY, the trans-Alaska pipeline in Alaska, and the Saturn auto plant in Tennessee.

State governments use PLA's as well. Governor Pataki of New York issued an Executive order similar to President Clinton's proposal in January 1997. The Governors of Nevada and New Jersey recently issued similar orders.

What PLA's do is require contractors to comply with the terms of labor agreements for the duration of the project. The advantages of PLA's are numerous. Projects are more likely to be completed on time, because a skilled labor supply is always available. There are fewer cost overruns, because workplace disputes can be quickly resolved through grievance and arbitration procedures, instead of by strikes or lockouts.

Projects built under PLA's have lower accident rates, because contractors can hire highly skilled and well-trained employees. Productivity increases as well, because of the higher skills of workers.

Opponents of PLA's claim that such agreements unfairly deny contracts and jobs to nonunion firms and individuals. That charge is false.

Nonunion contractors can and do bid on jobs where PLA's are in effect. In the Boston Harbor project, 40 percent of the subcontractors—over 100 firms—are nonunion. Similarly, on the Idaho National Engineering Labs PLA, with the Department of Energy, 30 percent of the subcontractors were nonunion.

Nonunion workers can and do work on sites where PLA's are in place. Unions are required by law to refer nonmembers to jobs on the same basis as union members.

The NLRB vigorously enforces this provision of the labor laws. Unions know how to comply, and do comply. In the 21 so-called right-to-work States, no worker can be required to give financial support to a union. In the other 29 States, if the particular contract provides it, workers can be required to pay a fee to the union while workers are employed at the job site. However, no employee can be forced to join the union, or to pay for union activities that are not related to collective bargaining.

In all of these ways, PLA's are beneficial to project owners and workers alike.

Further, it is clear that President Clinton has the authority to issue an Executive order dealing with Federal procurement practices. President Bush did just that in October 1992, when he issued an Executive order prohibiting Federal agencies from requiring PLA's on Federal construction projects. Re-

publican attacks on President Clinton's power to issue an order directing the consideration of such agreements are hypocritical at best.

President Clinton won the 1996 election. He is entitled to use his Presidential powers as he sees fit. It is unconscionable that Republican leaders in the Senate are holding Alexis Herman hostage to their antiworker bias. President Clinton has every right to issue his Executive order on Federal construction projects. The Herman nomination has nothing to do with that issue. Republicans should end this shameful tactic and let the Senate vote.

The Senate cannot faithfully discharge its constitutional responsibility to conform nominees if the process grinds to a halt for reasons that are obviously extraneous. The time has come to end this unjustified delay. It is long past time for the Senate to vote on Alexis Herman's nomination.

When a vote is taken, I am confident that Alexis Herman will be confirmed by the Senate and she will serve with distinction as our Labor Secretary. Ms. Herman's entire life has been dedicated to building coalitions and bringing people together, regardless of differences in race, class, or gender. She comes from a family of trail-blazers, and her own life, too, has been an extraordinary and inspirational story of commitment and achievement.

From childhood, her parents taught her the importance of helping others. Her mother, who once was Alabama's Teacher of the Year, brought Alexis with her as she taught reading to children and adults. Alexis' first summer job was teaching reading at an inner-city housing project.

Alexis also learned at home about the importance of standing up for your rights and participating in the political process. When she was only 5, her father faced down some members of the Ku Klux Klan who stopped the family car on Christmas Eve. In the 1940's, her father sued for the right to obtain an absentee ballot to vote in Mobile. Later, he was elected a Wardman of Mobile's 10th Ward, one of the first African-Americans elected in Alabama since Reconstruction.

In the early 1960's, her hometown of Mobile was still segregated. As a high school sophomore, unable to reconcile her Catholic faith with the segregation in the parochial schools, she confronted the Bishop of Mobile. His response was to suspend her from school. Undaunted, she continued to press for change. The following year, the first African-Americans were admitted to the white Catholic schools in Mobile.

After graduating from Xavier University, in New Orleans, she returned to Mobile as a social worker. She counseled delinquent youths, helped place children in foster homes, and worked to assist families in dealing with issues such as teenage pregnancy.

She saw that lack of skills and opportunities were keeping many of Mobile's