

communities where crime is low, where education is extremely strong, where our health care is rated the best in the country, where our mental health care is rated the best in the country, where we are rated best in the country for caring for troubled children, and where we still maintain a State which has no sales or income tax and delivers effective and efficient and first-class community services to our citizens.

And our citizens get involved. It is a State of voluntarism, a State where people understand if they are going to make their community work well they have to take the time to be involved in the local community activities whether it is the local Babe Ruth League or baseball team, or whether it happens to be the arts community or whether it is just the process of cleaning up the main street on cleanup day.

So I rise to congratulate my fellow citizens of New Hampshire, to especially congratulate the cities of Manchester, Portsmouth, and Nashua, and with a unique emphasis on Nashua in that it was rated No. 1 and that it is my hometown, where I was born and raised and went to school, and I am very proud that they have done so well. I congratulate all of those who make New Hampshire such a fine place to live.

PAYING OUR UNITED NATIONS ARREARS

Mr. GREGG. Madam President, I wanted to talk a little bit about the agreement which we are about to reach, it appears, relative to the United Nations and how we are going to pay our arrears. I chair the Committee on Commerce, State, and Justice, which has jurisdiction over the appropriations that go to the United Nations. At the behest of the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and at the request of the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, myself and Senator HELMS and Senator GRAMS and our staffs have been meeting assiduously with Ambassador Richardson's staff, and the staff of Secretary Albright. We have made considerable progress. In fact, we believe we have reached an agreement as to how to handle these arrears.

The basic theme of this agreement is that we are going to ask the United Nations to be a better place. We are not going to ask them to do things which are unreasonable. We are not going to ask them to do things which are political. We are just going to ask them to do a better job of handling our money. And to assure that, we are going to set certain benchmarks.

So, we are going to commit to the United Nations; we are basically going to give them what amounts to, in my opinion, an irrevocable letter of credit that we will pay the arrears as we see them. The number that we agreed on I believe is significant, and I believe it will be agreeable to the people at the United Nations. But, in exchange for

paying those arrears—and we are going to do it over a period of time—we are going to ask that the United Nations run a better shop, that it be more efficient, that it use those dollars more efficiently and that it make sure that it handles those dollars the way American taxpayers expect us to handle the dollars that they pay us. Because for every dollar spent at the United Nations today, 25 cents comes from the American taxpayer.

It is very hard today to go back to the people in New Hampshire, my good people who have just been rated so highly as the great place to live by Money magazine—it is very hard to go back to them and say, "Well, we are going to give the United Nations this amount of money for our dues but we are not sure where the money is spent, how it is spent, who it is spent on, or whether, when it is spent, it goes to where they say it is going to go."

To try to correct that, we are asking that the United Nations meet certain very definable, enforceable benchmarks. The Senator from Minnesota, who I notice is on the floor, Senator GRAMS, has been a major player in defining those benchmarks, and of course the Senator from North Carolina, Senator HELMS, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, has been a force of immense proportions on defining those benchmarks.

But agreement appears to have been reached, at least between ourselves and the administration. It is an agreement which is fair and which gives the United Nations the dollars which they feel they deserve. But, in exchange for those dollars, it does require that the United Nations be responsible with the management of those dollars and the management of additional dollars that we will be giving them in the foreseeable future. This agreement, I believe, will be included in the foreign relations bill, the authorization bill for foreign affairs, foreign relations, which is going to be coming through—the State Department authorization. It will be marked up later this week.

I just want to express my appreciation for all the people who worked so hard on this. We worked on it for about, I guess, now, almost 4 months. Fairly aggressive negotiations have occurred. I think it is good we have reached an agreement and it is positive for the process and it will immensely improve the operation of the United Nations, should the United Nations decide to go along with proposals that we have made. I presume they will because they are reasonable proposals.

Madam President, I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, let me claim as much time as I may consume of the leader's time and ask unanimous consent I may be followed by the Senator from Minnesota, Senator WELLSTONE.

Mr. WELLSTONE. If this would help in the deliberations, we have talked to

Senator GRAMS and I plan on restricting my remarks to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is the Senator from North Dakota seeking the time that has been designated in the agreement to the minority leader?

Mr. DORGAN. Yes, that is what I requested, Madam President.

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

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I will not consume but a fraction of the 1 hour, and the Senator from Minnesota, Senator WELLSTONE, will consume a very short amount of time. I believe Senator GRAMS will then be recognized. We had a visit about that and I appreciate the courtesy of both of my colleagues.

A VIGIL ON THE DISASTER RELIEF BILL

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, last evening a number of us were here, a good many Senators, as a matter of fact, were here almost all night holding a vigil on the issue of the disaster relief bill that seems ensnared in, regrettably, politics as usual. We have done the only thing we can do, and that is to apply as much consistent pressure as is possible to the Congress to say, "Do the right thing." And the right thing is to pass disaster relief for victims who have suffered natural disasters, especially the flood victims in the region of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and get them that aid as soon as is possible.

I am not here to point fingers or to say that there is this side or that side. For me there is only one side and that is being on the side of victims of a natural disaster. I know there are a lot of things floating around here, back and forth, with extraneous amendments and so on. I am not interested in politics. I am only interested in progress, speaking on behalf of some people who were dealt a very serious blow, one they did not deserve but one that they now have to try to recover from, and one they will recover from when we reach out our hand of help to say, "You are not alone. The rest of the country wants to offer you some help."

During this vigil we held last night—my time was from midnight to 3 in the morning—I found myself at 2 in the morning talking on a nationwide radio talk show with "The Trucking Bozo," I guess his show is called. I guess I didn't think, when I came to the Senate, that I would be, at 2 a.m., talking to the "Trucking Bozo" on a national radio program. But to the extent I had an opportunity to talk to truckers across this country who were hauling America's goods back and forth, I am glad I did. I hope they got the message as well, that most of us want what is right for this country, and what is right at this moment is for Congress to stop all the extraneous things that are going on and pass disaster relief.

In the middle of all of these discussions, however, with the "Trucking

Bozo" and a call-in radio station in New York and Denver and Boston and elsewhere across the country, we visited with many victims of the disaster. One of them last evening, among many who shed tears talking about their plight, was a man named Mark. Mark called from Grand Forks, ND. He has been out of his home now, I guess, for 5 or nearly 6 weeks. He has not seen his children, he said, for close to a month. They are with the grandparents. And his wife, he said, is in the hospital, dying of cancer, with a month or month and a half left to live.

He, at 1 in the morning, was calling me to say, "Somehow it's unfair for us to be held hostage here. For me, for my family, for our community, we desperately need to get the help that is in this bill to put our lives back together."

For this person to come, with all of the burdens in his life, to call in and urge, once again, the responsible thing be done, it really almost breaks your heart to know that all of these families, many of whom are now separated, some of whom last night said they are living in tents in their front yard because their home was destroyed and is uninhabitable, others living in camper trailers, others living in shelters, others living in neighboring towns with families split, having lived like that for weeks and now wondering, what about tomorrow? What about my home that was destroyed? What about my job, it's not there. What about my future and asking us, "Can't you please do something?"

I will not today and will not in the future say that one side is wrong and the other side is right. We are better and they are not. That is not what this is about. It is about Congress doing what it historically always has done on a disaster bill. The Congress is a unique institution. In a democracy, it is a wonderful institution, and I feel privileged every day to wake up and come and serve this country in the U.S. Senate. But we have rules, very few of which in the Senate prevent us from adding things to other bills. On almost any occasion, any day, any way, someone brings a bill to the floor of the Senate and someone adds an amendment that is totally extraneous—and they do it on all sides of the political aisle, and I understand that—but, generally speaking, on disaster bills, that has not been the case. Why? Because disaster relief bills are different. They represent an emergency response to people in need.

This got caught up in some of those issues, and I say let's decide today to stop that. Let's take all of these extraneous issues off, pass this bill, get the President to sign it and get help to the people who desperately need it. I know, because I come from North Dakota and because that was perhaps the hardest hit area—North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota—in these disasters, that I have a very parochial interest in this. But I am telling you, if every Member

of the Senate could visit with our constituents in our region and walk away not having a broken heart from what those people face and not have a feeling of enormous responsibility to help them in any way possible on an urgent basis, to help them right now to put their lives together, there isn't one Member of this body who can resist this.

The Senators from Minnesota, Senator GRAMS and Senator WELLSTONE, the Senators from South Dakota, Senator DASCHLE and Senator JOHNSON, and the Senators from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD and myself, all of us worked very hard to put the disaster package together. We had great cooperation from all sides of the political aisle in the Senate.

I want to close with this point. While I am enormously gratified by the cooperation we have had and feel gratified with the work we did together, when those who now talk about scaling down this bill also talk about maybe diminishing the amount of disaster aid we have already agreed to and fought so hard to get, I say to them, that is not a way to solve that problem this afternoon or tomorrow, by scaling back the disaster aid those folks are waiting for. Let's instead scale back the extraneous provisions, scale back and eliminate the unrelated amendments, get rid of them and get on with the business of this Congress to pass a disaster bill, have the President sign it and say to Mark, whose wife is in the hospital and whose children are living with grandparents, that we care about you, we want to help you and we want to help you and thousands and thousands of others like you who this morning didn't wake up in their homes because they are destroyed; we want to help you make your lives whole again.

That is part of the culture of this country. It is the best instincts of America to reach out and say, "You're not alone, the rest of the American people are with you and want to help you in this time of crisis."

Let's try to do that today. This Congress can pass this bill today, and I intend to make a unanimous-consent request again to do that, as I did yesterday and the day before. I shall not do that at this moment. If we do it today, the President could sign it tonight and the aid would begin flowing tomorrow, and we would have helped many Americans get back on their feet.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. Madam President, I shall be brief today. Let me just build on the comments of my colleague from North Dakota.

It is my fervent hope, and it is not an exaggeration to say prayer, that when I go home this weekend, back to Minnesota, I will be able to say to people, "Congress has acted, and we have

passed a disaster relief bill that will provide you with help so that you can begin the process of rebuilding your lives." That is what people are asking for. No more than that. All of us, if we had been flooded out or if we had been faced with some kind of disaster like this, would also be hoping to get the same kind of help.

Madam President, I, too, last night had a chance to talk to people around the country on radio and television and whatnot. I think that the goal of yesterday and today, because the Senate is not going to really be back conducting business as usual until we get this disaster relief bill passed—that is our commitment, that is how we fight for people in our States—but I think really the goal is to just press and press and press and keep fighting for people, but more with the focus on what we can do as opposed to finger pointing and getting personal.

I have talked to enough Republican colleagues on the majority side who, I believe, even if we don't agree on every issue, want to come together, and I hope it will happen. I think it should happen this week.

I think that this particular form of gridlock is not working well for this Congress, and I don't think people around the country understand how it can be that on a bill which is to provide emergency assistance to people, you get all sorts of other measures dealing with how the Census Bureau does its work or dealing with debates about appropriations bills and the budget and all the rest. I think most people believe that when it comes to disaster relief, you should try and get it to people and keep off the extraneous measures that are so controversial.

There are a lot of good people here on both sides of the aisle. I was asked last night many, many times, especially from Minnesota, "Do you think there is going to be some agreement?" And I said, "I cannot believe there won't be."

I just think it is going to happen. It has to happen.

The only appeal I would make to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that if, in fact, we are going to be talking about scaling back the disaster relief, I worry about it because we had a very clear definition of what it would take by way of emergency assistance—and I use those words carefully—to help people get back on their own two feet. This was really a good bipartisan effort. That is what we had. I really hope that my colleagues will understand that we are speaking and we are fighting and we are using our leverage as Senators in order to get the help to people back in our States. We are going to continue to do that until we, in fact, are able to get the job done.

So my appeal to my colleagues is: Let's have an agreement; take the extraneous provisions off this bill. We can debate them separately. We can have an up-or-down vote, or if there is some alternative proposal that people have, great. Let's just try and get the

help to people, and let's not delay it any further.

I was asked by somebody back in Minnesota whether I really liked last night. I was on the first shift. I said, "Actually, not so much so. I would rather be doing it on the floor of the Senate. I would rather be in a markup in committee. But I, as a Senator, will do everything I can to fight hard for people in Minnesota."

I think from talking to colleagues in the majority party, we are going to reach agreement. I believe that, I say to my colleague from Minnesota, Senator GRAMS. There has to be an agreement. That is what we have. We have to make that happen so all of us can go back to our States and say to people, "We wish this had not been delayed and delayed and delayed, but now, finally, a good bill is passed and we are going to get the help to you." That is the goal, that should be the result, and I hope that that happens this week. That is my appeal to my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

DISASTER RELIEF AND PREVENTING A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, we have asked to set aside a little time this morning to talk about the issue the Senator from Minnesota talks about. Each of us wants to find a way to get help to people who need it as a result of the disaster. I think there are a number of issues involved. I believe as we move toward a solution, it is useful to talk about those things.

Certainly, there are legitimate concerns on both sides of this bill. I am satisfied that our leadership is now putting together something that will be presented, hopefully that will be acceptable.

I think it is well to recognize that we want to get this disaster aid out, but there are certain things that are very important, as in any discussion, to both sides. One of them is to get something in that avoids the human disaster that might well happen in the future if we had another shutdown of the Government. So this can be one of those things.

There also has to be an understanding, of course, on an issue of where there are different points of view that both sides have to be willing to make some accommodation. The idea that somehow you can't do anything unless the President approves is not the system we have here. We have a divided Government. We have the President with authority to do what he does and the Congress with the authority to do what they do. When they come to a conflict, there has to be some movement and not simply a pronouncement that the President doesn't like that and, therefore, it won't happen. That is not the way it works.

So, Madam President, we would like to talk a little bit about that. I am

joined by my colleagues. I yield first to the Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS. I thank my colleague from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I was very disappointed by President Clinton's veto of the emergency aid bill, which provided some \$5.5 billion in disaster relief nationwide, with a major portion of those dollars dedicated to helping to rebuild the flood-ravaged communities of my home State of Minnesota and also in the Dakotas.

Having been with the President in seeing firsthand the damage and the despair that was caused by the flooding, I cannot believe that he was willing to reject our legislation to help support the people of Minnesota and the Dakotas as they rebuild their homes, communities, and their lives in the wake of the flood.

Our legislation sent a very clear message that the people of Minnesota have not been forgotten by Congress during this critical time, but the President's veto suggests, however, that some in Washington need to have their memories refreshed.

I am particularly disturbed by the fact that the President used as his primary excuse for vetoing the emergency flood relief bill our inclusion of a measure to protect flood victims in Minnesota and Americans everywhere from a potential Government shutdown later this year.

For reasons I have repeated on this floor many times, I believe that delivering emergency aid to flood victims and keeping the Government open for business during the rebuilding process must be our twin goals at this time.

Just as the emergency flood relief serves as an assurance to Minnesotans that their urgent needs will be met, our efforts to keep the Government from shutting down will also give them a guarantee that any budget squabbles that happen to pop up here in Washington will not affect our long-term efforts to help rebuild our State. And that is an assurance we can't afford to go without.

By vetoing our flood relief bill, the President indicated that having a leg up in this year's budget debate is higher on his priority list than delivering flood assistance to those who need it. That was wrong, but, as we know, it cannot be changed. The people of Minnesota and the Dakotas already know how well Washington politicians can talk, and they don't want any more talk; they want some action.

Stopping our work in the Senate and blocking us from taking action on anything accomplishes nothing. Positive, constructive action is what the Senate should be working on to deliver. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to join me in working to ensure that flood relief gets out of Washington and that it gets into the hands of the people of Minnesota and the Dakotas as quickly as possible.

Immediately after the veto was announced, I wrote letters to Senate Ma-

jority Leader TRENT LOTT and also Minority Leader TOM DASCHLE. In that letter, I proposed a compromise I believe will help speed up the enactment of the disaster relief legislation, while at the same time allowing Congress a separate vote, without any unnecessary delays, on the Government Shutdown Prevention Act. In my letters to Senators LOTT and DASCHLE, I proposed that they consider removing the Government shutdown provision from the emergency aid legislation with a specific time agreement for debating and voting on the two issues in separate pieces of legislation.

That would allow the Senate to debate and pass both the emergency flood relief bill and the Government Shutdown Prevention Act on their individual merits, away from the political haggling that has delayed action on these important bills.

I was encouraged yesterday to learn of the support for my proposal by Vice President AL GORE and Senate Minority Leader DASCHLE. Their announcement of support clearly shows that there is room for negotiations to reconcile our differences and to deliver the flood assistance to Minnesota and the Dakotas.

I have also been in negotiations with the majority leader, who expressed his intention to consider a number of different alternatives, including mine, on how best to move ahead and deliver flood relief.

I am going to continue to work closely with both Senators LOTT and DASCHLE, as well as my other colleagues in the Senate, to expedite this process. From the events of the last 2 days, I am optimistic that the two sides are closer to a reasonable settlement than anyone in the media may be suggesting.

Now we must take action to bridge the gap and ensure the delivery of emergency disaster relief and the continued protection of the American people from a Government shutdown.

At the very least, my proposal has opened the negotiation process to move ahead on these important issues post-veto. Again, while I am disappointed that the President chose to veto emergency flood relief, I hope that he will not shut the present window of opportunity to try to work together to find some common ground.

Certainly, my constituents in Minnesota, who have already suffered so much at the hands of the flood, cannot afford inaction.

As flood victims in Minnesota begin rebuilding their homes, their neighborhoods, their businesses, and their lives in the wake of the flood, they need our assurance that the Federal Government will deliver the aid that it promised.

Flood victims also need to know that the Government will be there throughout the year to meet their urgent needs as their rebuilding progresses.