

which passed with a substitute amendment by unanimous consent.

Earthquakes are some of the world's most dangerous natural hazards. They can seem to strike with sudden unpredictability, and can affect a large area causing damage miles away from the epicenter. The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, NEHRP, was created in 1977 to conduct basic research about earthquakes and develop strategies, such as stricter building codes, to mitigate the effects of them. The NEHRP program is composed of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, in the Department of Homeland Security's Emergency Preparedness and Response, EP&R, Directorate; the National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST; the U.S. Geological Survey, USGS; and the National Science Foundation, NSF.

The 6.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Parkfield, California last week demonstrated both the dangers of earthquakes and the success of the NEHRP program. Because of the strong building codes and preparations developed by NEHRP and taken by the people of Parkfield, there were no fatalities.

This bill would authorize the NEHRP program from Fiscal Year, FY, 2005 through FY 2009. In addition, it would make a number of reforms to the program, including designating NIST as the program's lead agency and establishing an Interagency Coordinating Committee and an Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction to improve the program's coordination and implementation.

This bill also would require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to establish a National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program consisting of representatives from NIST, NSF, FEMA, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA. The purpose of this program would be to improve our understanding of windstorms and how they affect our communities. We recently witnessed the devastation to Florida by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne. Congress should recognize the importance of windstorm research to develop ways to reduce future damage from hurricanes, tornadoes, and other such phenomena.

Finally, the bill would authorize funding for the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Commercial Space Transportation from FY 2005 through FY 2009. SpaceShipOne demonstrated yesterday that we are at the beginning of a new age in space travel, in which private citizens will be able to finance, operate, and travel in their own vehicles. It is vital that this office be adequately funded to ensure that the government plays an appropriate oversight role in this promising field.

Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their support of this legislation, and ask unanimous consent that my statement be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the substitute

amendment to H.R. 2608, the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act. I fully support this amendment. The first two titles in this substitute amendment were distinct bills, each extremely important to fighting the respective hazard. I want to thank Senator BILL NELSON and Senator HUTCHISON for their work in bring the wind title to the committee's attention.

Earthquakes are deadly natural hazards that arrive without warning and can claim thousands of lives. For example, a 6.6 magnitude earthquake in Iran last year killed 30,000 people, while a similar magnitude quake in California killed two people. Thousands of lives have been saved as a result of the fine research conducted through the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program. I support the earthquake title of the substitute amendment, but I want to reiterate that the National Institute of Standards and Technology needs greater funding if it is to fulfill its new role as the lead agency in this program. I hope that my colleagues will see to it that this excellent agency has the resources it needs to continue to develop standards that protect the public.

Building codes work. The hurricanes we've seen in the past month prove that. According to the St. Petersburg Times, houses built before the building codes were revised in 1992, as a result of Hurricane Andrew, were blown off their foundations. Houses built after new building codes were in place are still standing. These disasters cost the country several billion dollars in damage each year. By establishing a national program to improve design and engineering to protect against windstorms, we can save not only money, but more importantly lives.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the windstorm impact reduction bill, a bill included in the earthquake bill before the Senate for consideration today. The windstorm bill, supported in the Senate by me and Senator HUTCHISON and by Representatives MOORE and NEUGEBAUER in the House, sets up a national program to reduce the loss of life and property due to windstorms.

It is an understatement to say that the four hurricanes that hit Florida—Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne—in the last 6 weeks demonstrate the great need for this legislation. More than 70 lives were lost, and homes, businesses, roads and bridges were devastated by the hurricanes. It is estimated that the losses from these hurricanes will surpass the \$20 billion in losses from Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the costliest hurricane ever.

It is imperative that the amount of destruction suffered by the State of Florida never be repeated again. This bill will give us the tools to protect our communities from future material losses and to reduce human suffering. An interagency working group consisting of representatives of the Na-

tional Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Federal Emergency Management Agency will be responsible for planning and managing this program.

The program will have three goals: No. 1, improved understanding of windstorms; No. 2, windstorm impact assessment; and No. 3, windstorm impact reduction. We will achieve these goals through data collection and analysis, outreach, technology transfer, and research and development.

As a result of this program, we will translate existing and future information and research findings into cost-effective and affordable practices for design and construction professionals, and State and local officials. And this Interagency group will provide biennial updates of their progress to Congress so we know what progress has been made and what more needs to be done.

We'll also get a broad cross-section of interests involved through an advisory committee—so that real life issues are addressed and on-site expertise is utilized. Any my hope is that the devastation of Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne will never be experienced again in my State of Florida or in any other State.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the McCain substitute amendment which is at the desk be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 3983) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The bill (H.R. 2608), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

BELARUS DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, also I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 854 which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 854) to provide for the promotion of democracy, human rights and rule of law in the Republic of Belarus, and for the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus sovereignty and independence.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am today in support of H.R. 854, the Belarus Democracy Act. Alexander Lukashenka, President of Belarus, is the last remaining dictator in Europe. After orchestrating an illegal and unconstitutional referendum in November 1996, enabling him to impose a new

constitution, abolish the duly-elected parliament, and install a largely powerless national assembly, he has progressively abolished the previously existing democracy in that country.

Belarusian authorities under Lukashenka's control have mounted a major systematic crackdown on civil society through the closure, harassment, and repression of non-governmental organizations and independent trade unions. Three leaders of the democratic forces in Belarus—Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and Yuri Zakharenka—and one critical journalist, Dmitry Zavadsky, have disappeared and are presumed dead. Former Belarus Government officials have made credible allegations, with evidence, that officials of the Lukashenka regime were involved in the disappearances. Lukashenka's administration has repressed freedom of speech and expression, has reversed the revival of Belarusian language and culture, and has harassed religious groups.

The Government of Belarus has made no substantive progress in addressing criteria established in 2000 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to end repression and the climate of fear, permit functioning independent media, ensure transparency of the election process, and strengthen

the functions of parliament. The campaign for the parliamentary elections to be held October 17 has not been fair. Lukashenka has also added a referendum to the ballot to eliminate term-limits for the presidency so that he can run again in 2006.

H.R. 854, the Belarus Democracy Act, authorizes funds to assist in the observation of elections and the promotion of free and fair electoral processes; the development of democratic political parties; radio and television broadcasting to and within Belarus; the development of non-governmental organizations promoting democracy and supporting human rights; the development of independent media within Belarus and from outside the country; international exchanges and professional training programs for leaders and members of the democratic forces; and other activities consistent with the purposes of the Act.

Like most other legislation, this bill is not perfect. I would have preferred even stronger legislation. In fact, I had prepared such legislation, which I planned to introduce in the form of an amendment to the State Department Authorization legislation if it had reached the Senate floor. My bill would have authorized, with specific numbers, increased funding for the activities de-

scribed above; would have streamlined and tightened controls on exports to Belarus; and would have imposed visa bans on Lukashenka and his inner circle.

Unfortunately, for unrelated reasons, the State Department Authorization bill has not been brought up, and there is no time in the closing days of the 108th Congress to introduce my legislation as a free-standing bill.

Nonetheless, I strongly support H.R. 854. It makes unmistakably clear to President Lukashenka and his cohorts that the United States strongly disapproves of his brutal authoritarian rule and that we intend to continue to oppose him. Lukashenka is an anachronism in twenty-first century Europe and is surely destined for the ash-heap of history. The Belarus Democracy Act may hasten this process. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 854.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 854) was read the third time and passed.