

a bit from the agenda of the next several weeks and turn to the issue of protecting America's taxpayers. Four important family tax revisions are set to expire at the end of this year. They include the increase in the child tax credit to \$1,000, marriage penalty tax relief, expansion of the 10-percent tax bracket, and the increase in the alternative minimum tax exemption. Each of these provisions impacts families. Each has helped ease the burden on millions of American families.

If we do not act in this body to extend the provisions, millions of hard-working American families will pay the price. They will be unfairly penalized. If we do not act, their taxes will go up and their household budgets will shrink. They will have less freedom and less ability to make ends meet.

For example, if we do not act, 70 million women will see their taxes increase on average \$660. If we do not act, 46 million married couples will each pay on average a whopping \$900 more in taxes. If we do not act, 38 million families with children will pay \$900 more, on average. If we do not act, 8 million single women with children will see their taxes increase by nearly \$370. If we do not act, 11 million elderly would each have to pay \$383 more. If we do not act, 23 million small business owners would incur tax increases averaging \$784. Nearly 2 million individuals and families who currently have no income tax liability would once again become subject to the income tax.

That is what is at stake. That is what is before the Senate. That is simply unacceptable. We cannot allow the American people to suffer an automatic and totally unavoidable tax hike because we in this body fail to act.

There is bipartisan consensus to take action to extend these family tax provisions and to protect the American family. Protecting the homeland, protecting the American family, are tall goals, but they are absolutely crucial to the security and the well-being of our country.

Meanwhile, we also have a responsibility to deliberate on the President's judicial nominees under the previous order at 5:30 today. We will have two votes on the two district judge nominations, Virginia Maria Hernandez Covington of Florida and Michael H. Schneider, Sr. of Texas. Both are exceptional nominees. Both enjoyed bipartisan support. Following these votes, we will consider another excellent nominee, District Judge Michael Watson. His nomination will not require a rollcall vote.

Judge Hernandez Covington is a Florida native and currently serves on the Second District Court of Appeals. She stands before us as a nominee to the middle district court of Florida as an appellate judge. Hernandez Covington authored over 110 opinions and has heard more than 1,000 cases. The American Bar Association unanimously rated judge Hernandez Covington well-qualified for the U.S. District Court.

The second judge under consideration today is Michael Schneider. He currently presides on the Texas Supreme Court. President Bush has nominated Judge Schneider to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas. As an appellate and trial judge, Justice Schneider has heard civil and criminal matters from across the State. He was honored in 1994 as the Texas trial judge of the year. In 2001 he was awarded Texas's appellate judge of the year. Judge Schneider received the ABA's highest rating, unanimously well-qualified.

Our third nominee, Judge Michael Watson, has been an appellate and trial court judge in the Ohio State courts for over 8 years. He currently serves on the Tenth District Court of Appeals. The American Bar Association has rated Judge Watson qualified to serve on the U.S. District Court.

Each of these candidates is indeed outstanding. I expect their votes to go smoothly this afternoon.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not mention the fact that 10 other nominees are still in limbo. Since 2003, seven appellate court nominees have been filibustered. They have been denied something very simple: an up-or-down vote by each Senator in the Senate. They have been denied that through filibusters. We believe that is wrong. We believe the obstruction tactics to which these individuals have been subjected is harmful and unfair. They are unfair to the nominees—public servants all—and they are harmful to the judicial system and to the Senate which is charged by the Constitution to do something very simple; that is, advice and consent. That means an up-or-down vote: Yes or no. If they want to vote no, they should be able to vote no. And if they want to vote yes, they should be able to vote yes. They deserve a vote.

I ask my colleagues to stop the obstruction and to allow an up-or-down vote on all these nominees. A simple up-or-down vote: Yes or no.

In closing, as we all know, President Clinton had heart surgery, and, as so many people have done, we offer our best wishes to the President for a speedy recovery. He underwent coronary bypass grafting and by all accounts has done very well. This is something that is very close to me. The coronary bypass grafting is an operation I performed routinely, an operation I did every day before coming to the Senate. It is routine. Now there are 330,000 done a year, about 1,000 a day—even more than that. About 500,000 were done before the new technology of stents and angioplasty came in. Although it is a routine procedure for many hospitals, postcoronary artery bypass grafting is a big operation. It is like being hit by a truck in terms of the recovery. It takes a few days.

President Clinton, by all accounts, has done very well. We heard last night from the surgeons. Obviously, we all have had the opportunity to extend our

thoughts and prayers to our colleague, Senator CLINTON, here and to their entire family over the last several days.

I also briefly mention in early August we tightened security around the Capitol significantly. Over the recess, Senator DASCHLE and I met with the Sergeant at Arms and other law enforcement and intelligence people. We agreed that new information regarding potential threats required our Capitol to establish some temporary perimeter security checkpoints at all streets leading into the complex, as well as a number of other security measures.

That said, we are working closely with the Capitol police and the District of Columbia to minimize any inconvenience.

We look forward to a busy session, a productive session over the next days and weeks. We will address legislation that is absolutely critical to the security of our homeland, to the security of the United States, and to the well-being of our fellow Americans. We will vote on, and I am confident we will pass, the supplemental appropriations bill for the State of Florida to help them respond to the devastation of Hurricanes Charley and Frances.

By working in a bipartisan manner—and as I said when we opened, I know the environment, and the larger environment, is going to be very politically charged, but if we in this body can work in a bipartisan manner, a focused manner, I am convinced we can accomplish the goals that are set out and move America forward. We will strengthen our security, we will strengthen our homes, and we will lend a hand to our neighbors as we confront the challenges ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Florida is recognized for 10 minutes.

#### EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS FOR FLORIDA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for the comforting statement that we will take up the emergency appropriations for FEMA to meet the first of two crisis we have had in the State of Florida over the course of the last few weeks.

If I might inquire of the majority leader, is it still the understanding of the majority leader that the House bill may come tonight, or are we looking at tomorrow in which we could pass this emergency supplemental appropriations?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, even since I completed my remarks, I was just inquiring. It depends entirely when we get the language from the House. I think we still have a shot of doing it later tonight. But we will be in session with the votes on the judges. If we need to stay in a little bit later to do it tonight, we will do it. I am very hopeful we will have language here within an hour and a half or 2 hours, in which case we will go to all the appropriate

people in the body to make sure the language is agreeable.

So I think we still have a good shot of doing it tonight. As I told the Senator from Florida, I recognize the importance of getting this money as quickly as possible in the people's hands, where they are not worried about money coming in. They are going to be able to take care of the people in Florida and emergencies around the country.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. As the Senator and I discussed last night, I was told by the Director of FEMA they are basically running out of money. By the end of the week, they are not going to have any cash to expend. So I think that ups the urgency of this appropriations.

I also appreciate the statement by the majority leader that this is just a first step. When we look at the needs, just for FEMA, from the first hurricane, Charley, it is going to exceed the \$2 billion request by the President. And that does not include all of the other agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, the Small Business Administration, the Economic Development Administration, the Defense costs. NASA has costs. You can go on down the list.

For example, compared to Hurricane Andrew 12 years ago, the FEMA cost then was \$2.9 billion. But the overall cost to the Federal Government, including all of the other agencies, was over \$6 billion. And that was just one hurricane, a magnitude greater than Charley, but now we have two. And Lord help us if we have three. But we are dealing in a range of probably \$4.5 billion out of these two.

So is it my understanding from the majority leader that it would be his intention, as he had discussed last night in our telephone conversation, that we would take up additional emergency appropriations next week?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in response to my colleague from Florida, I want to make it very clear, it is impossible to determine what the real requirement is going to be in Florida. The important thing is to look at this supplemental as a first major step to keep the emergency care, the shelters, the response flowing, and that there will be another supplemental. I will not have quite the sense of time urgency, meaning in hours. As you said, with FEMA not having sufficient funds by tomorrow, it means we need to act tonight or first thing in the morning. And we will follow up with appropriate deliberations as information comes forward and there are accurate requests being made and we can assess the full extent of the damage. But even with that, we need to do it quickly. It is not something we want to push way off into the future.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the majority leader and the minority leader for their cooperation because clearly the State of Florida is reeling under this one-two punch to which we have

been subjected. As a result, we have to act and act quickly.

I had a number of people in the press down in Florida asking me where the money was going to come from. If there is a reason for the Federal Government, it is to respond in times of emergency, whether that be a national emergency such as a war or a national emergency in times of natural disaster.

We have always done it. I remember when I came to Congress in 1979, one of the first votes I cast was in relation to the eruption of Mount St. Helens in the State of Washington. That place needed a great deal of Federal assistance to overcome all of the deficiencies that had happened to that society in the midst of that natural disaster.

Now we have not only the disaster of one hurricane but having the State crisscrossed with a big X over the center of the State almost like a bull's eye by the second hurricane. And thank the Good Lord it was not a category 4, which a day out it was a category 4. In this particular case, it had winds up to 145 miles an hour. Well, by the time it hit, it had subsided to a category 2, with winds up to 105 miles an hour. There is a huge difference in the destructive force of the winds going from 105 to 145 miles an hour. The destructive potential of that wind goes up exponentially as you raise the wind speed.

But what happened with Frances, even though it subsided to having winds up to 105 miles an hour when it hit the coast, with gusts up to 120 miles per hour, it lingered, it slowed, it stalled, it wobbled, and it was so massive it covered up the entire State of Florida so that parts that were thought to be immune from this hurricane because of the track of the hurricane, suddenly were engulfed in fierce winds and driving rain which has caused enormous flooding problems.

So it will be my intention, once we pass this emergency supplemental of \$2 billion—which is not going to anywhere cover just the costs for FEMA for the first hurricane—to come back for appropriate additional funds for the first hurricane as well as the second hurricane.

For example, besides FEMA, there are the expenses of the Department of Agriculture. We are going to have huge crop losses from Charley and now also from Frances. There is also the Small Business Administration, which has a number of relief programs in addition to low-interest loans; the Economic Development Administration in the Department of Commerce; and the millions of dollars to assist the Department of Transportation, as well as the American Red Cross.

I mentioned some damage done to the Department of Defense, and NASA, for that matter. As a matter of fact, from the first hurricane, NASA incurred costs of \$750,000, and the hurricane only just scraped the edge of the space center. This one did significant damage, taking out 1,000 very large

panels on the vehicle assembly building, which is the largest building in volume where the space shuttle is stacked vertically. When we come together as the Federal Government, it is time to respond.

I thank my colleagues for their favorable consideration of this request. I remind them that we are not through yet. We have some major additional emergency supplemental appropriations. When we compare this to another major natural disaster such as Andrew, we can see the Federal Government spent over \$6 billion on the cost of recovery from Andrew. It won't be that much for these two storms, but it will be substantial.

I am very grateful to the Senate for listening to the pleas of the two Senators from Florida as we ask for its help in this time of need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous agreement, the Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I expect most Senators feel as do I: Whatever resources are needed by the citizens of Florida to recover should be provided by the Senate. I certainly will be one Senator who wants to support the \$2 billion emergency supplemental that is necessary now and whatever additional resources are needed to help Floridians recover from these devastating storms. The storm season is not even over at this point. Most of us do not understand, perhaps, the experience of the citizens of Florida. I did want to make the point earlier that when we do the second piece, there are some other parts of the country that are going to have to be dealt with. That was the point I was making.

I want to make sure everybody understands: Whatever resources are needed by the citizens of Florida, I believe the Senate should stand ready to say to them, you are not alone; this country wants to help in times of need and in times of emergency.

#### NETWORK COVERAGE OF CONVENTIONS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the two political conventions. My speech will not be about the politics of the conventions but about the coverage of the conventions.

Senator LOTT and I have worked all of this year and the major part of last year on an issue dealing with the concentration of broadcast ownership in a rule that was crafted by the Federal Communications Commission that would allow even greater concentration in broadcast ownership. That rule would have allowed in the larger cities for one company to purchase three television stations, eight radio stations, the cable system, and the largest newspaper, and that would be fine.

Many Republicans and Democrats don't think that is fine. We think the concentration of ownership of media