

who has some very high principles, because he announced that he was in favor of the hate crimes bill, was labeled, as reported in the St. Petersburg Times, as "the new darling of the homosexual extremists" as a means of trying to cut him down in a Republican primary.

This has absolutely gotten out of control and I am afraid we are going to see more of the same as we come into the general election. It is exasperating. It is not the American way. We have seen this time after time. My goodness, what do we have to expect in the Presidential race in the next 6 weeks?

That is my response to the Senator.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Chair state what the matter before the Senate is at this stage?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business for debate only.

Mr. REID. And the time is not divided between now and 3 o'clock?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator from North Dakota has expired.

Mr. REID. Following that expiration of time, how is the time allocated?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is no order in place.

The Senator from Nevada.

VOTING IN AMERICA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to comment briefly on the statement of my dear friend from New Mexico about voting and all that he thinks is wrong with our system. I would be happy to look at his legislation. But it seems to me around here what we should be dealing with is giving people the opportunity to vote more easily rather than making it more difficult.

I think it speaks volumes that when you look at the States that have same-day registration, the turnout is much bigger. We have one State where there is no registration, and the vote there, of course, is even higher. In those instances where you have same-day registration and you have no registration, with all the modern computerization, all the ways of checking, there has not been a single case of fraud reported, to my knowledge. So I think what we should try to do is make it easier for people to vote, not harder. I heard my friend, if I understood his statement, say that there are some people out registering lots and lots of people. Well, good. Good. We need more people like that.

I am very disappointed in the State of Nevada. I have tried for years to get the system changed. But, in Nevada, we cut off registration a month before the primary election, and then we cut it off a month before the general election. Just when people are interested in voting, we cut them off. And the county clerk says: Oh, it's so hard for us to get all the records in order. That is silliness. With all the modern technology we have, it is easy.

The reason it is hard is people like to know who they have who voted for

them last time or voted against them. They do not want to make a big impression on getting new people into the system. It is easier to deal with what you have, and it is wrong.

We started off after the Civil War with rules to keep people from voting. We need to get out of that mindset.

We need to make it easier for people to vote, and one way to do that is to have either same-day registration or even no registration. There are plenty of ways of checking to see if people are trying to vote fraudulently.

In the State of Oregon, people vote by mail. They do not have polling places in Oregon, and it works out just fine. The State of Washington also does a lot of their balloting by mail. It works out fine. Those two States decided they wanted to do what they could to increase voter participation, not cut back on it. We need to do more of that rather than all these laws that are going to throw people in jail if they register wrong people. I think there are so many different ways of checking to make sure you have an honest election that you do not need to have all these punitive measures that are proposed.

APOLOGY TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I know my friend from Florida wants to speak. I certainly want to give him that ability. But I just want to say this: The Senator from North Dakota is absolutely right. Senator DASCHLE is a veteran who has served in the U.S. military. He is a person who has dedicated much of his legislative life to helping people who have served in the military.

There are a lot of people who can take responsibility for dealing with Agent Orange, but Senator DASCHLE, who is a Vietnam-era veteran, knows about Agent Orange, and he has worked tirelessly to get things done in that regard.

I have worked with him on concurrent receipts. He has been a big advocate of concurrent receipts. He is a person who has almost single-handedly taken care of TRICARE, to make sure that National Guardsmen and reservists are treated more fairly with medical care.

To think that in any way this good man has somehow emboldened the enemy—and that is in the way of a fundraising letter—is not very good. I know the man running against Senator DASCHLE. I like him. I am just terribly disappointed that he would allow people to use him the way they have. That Senator DASCHLE has emboldened the enemy is unfair. It is outrageous. And I think that Congressman John Thune should apologize to the people of South Dakota for suggesting that TOM DASCHLE has emboldened the enemy. I assume he is referring to these nameless, faceless, evil people who are committing this war on terror, who are executing this war on terror.

Senator DASCHLE has somehow emboldened the enemy, these name-

less, faceless people who are killing innocent women and children, and others? I think not. And I say John Thune, whom I have the highest respect for, should return the dignity to his person and disavow this statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Senator withhold?

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I will yield to the Senator from Nevada.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for morning business for the purpose of statements only until 3:45 p.m.—that is the next hour—with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I also say, Mr. President, if there is some concern because we used the last 15 minutes, if the Republicans want to come and get a little extra time because of that, we would be happy to take care of that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

THREE MAJOR HURRICANES IN FLORIDA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, my family has been in Florida for 175 years, and I do not remember in all of the history books where major hurricanes have happened back to back. It has happened with lesser hurricanes, but I think the record book was shattered when three large, major hurricanes in a row have battered our State over the course of a 6-week period: first Charley, then Frances, and now Ivan.

As I flew in a National Guard helicopter last Friday with the Governor over the Barrier Islands, I saw there were no sand dunes anymore in the Barrier Islands of Pensacola Beach. The sugary white sand of the beaches and those sand dunes had been washed across the entire Barrier Island from the Gulf of Mexico to Pensacola Bay. And from the air, it appeared as if the entire Barrier Island was washed in white. There were structures standing, but the structures were usually the newer ones built according to the new building codes. And as we are hearing in the reports out of Alabama, those structures were even uprooted on their foundations and have to be destroyed. If it was an old structure, that old structure is history.

For not only the howling winds of 138 miles an hour, but the tidal surge of the water that came with the hurricane winds—water that then washed up into the very large Pensacola Bay, even taking out major sections of the Interstate 10 bridge—we did some quick mathematical calculations and figured that a wall of water at least 40 feet

high would have had to hit that bridge, positioned some 12 miles from the gulf up Pensacola Bay. It would take 40 feet of water to have enough pressure to raise the sections of Interstate 10's bridge off of the pilings and deposit them in the bottom of Pensacola Bay. And in many other sections of the bridge, the same effort moved it 3 and 4 feet on top of the pilings.

Even at the end of Pensacola Bay, some 20 to 25 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the wave of water was so fast and so furious that as to the four-lane highway, US 90, that rings the shore of Pensacola Bay on that far northern end, two lanes of those four lanes were washed out at the bridgeheads and thus, is complicating the rescue efforts, the rebuilding efforts because of traffic not being able to get to Pensacola, with only two-way traffic open on one of those lanes that had been spared.

We are finding out once again, because we keep coming with emergency appropriations for Federal disaster relief, that hurricanes can be quite costly, as we have known over the years. It was my freshman year in the Congress in 1979 that I voted for my first disaster relief, which was in response to the eruption of Mount St. Helens in the State of Washington covering so much of that State with soot and ash. But that is in part what a Federal Government is for—to respond in times of emergency and disaster.

So, too, we have seen the President request \$2 billion for the first hurricane and disaster relief—that won't take care of all of the relief for Charley—and another \$3.1 billion was requested for Charley and Frances. That certainly won't take care of those two storms because there is another billion dollars of agricultural relief that is going to be needed that the President did not request. But we haven't even gotten to the third hurricane, Hurricane Ivan. As we speak, those calculations are being made. This Congress is going to have to respond.

Last week I had a colloquy with the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, the distinguished Senator from Alaska. He assured me and gave me his commitment that he would proceed on the agricultural relief with regard to Hurricane Frances and Hurricane Charley in the conference on the Homeland Security Appropriations bill. Huge parts of the \$65 billion-a-year agricultural industry in Florida have been destroyed—citrus, both orange and grapefruit; the nursery industry, including the fern industry, of which Florida is one of the major growers of ferns; vegetables; fruits; cattle; dairy cows that dried up because they could not be milked since there was no electricity to operate the automatic milking machines. You can go on down the list of all the agricultural commodities that were hit as well as the equipment those farmers owned.

But now with Ivan in the panhandle, we are going to have additional agri-

cultural losses, particularly from cotton and peanuts. I dare say that will be shared with the State of Alabama, perhaps with Georgia, as Ivan raced across the southern United States after it had made landfall at the Florida-Alabama border.

It is interesting that in our State, having been put in hurricane mode for 6 weeks, people began to recover from one blow and then here comes another blow. In fact, the people in the center part of the State on the first two storms were hit twice where the two storms passed and happened to cross—Charley from southwest to northeast, Frances from southeast to northwest. And they crossed their paths in the center of the State.

Then along comes Ivan. At one point we even thought the State of Florida might be spared. It looked as if it was going to be bearing down on, Lord forbid, New Orleans, which is lower than sea level, or Mississippi where so many of the establishments there, including the gaming industry, are on floating boats. You can imagine the wreckage that would have caused.

But it shifted to the east, bearing down on the Florida-Alabama line, with the winds coming off in a counterclockwise rotation off of the Gulf of Mexico, in its most fierce fury, on to the shores of that southern Alabama coastline and northwestern Florida coastline.

That is a part of our State that has a great deal of the national assets of our U.S. military. Ninety percent of the buildings at the Pensacola Naval Air Station had severe damage. At Whiting Field, where Navy pilots and Marine pilots and Coast Guard pilots and Air Force pilots, both fixed wing and helicopter, are trained, all of the hangars sustained major roof damage with the roofs being ripped off of those large structures. So, as we have responded after the other two hurricanes with special appropriations to fix up those military facilities so they can get back in the business of training our young men and women so they can defend this country, so, too, we are now going to have to address those particular needs even as far east on that Florida panhandle as Eglin Air Force Base which had its major tower completely taken out of commission.

The Senate will hear me, over and over, advocating and trying to articulate the needs for a State that is in crisis, a State that has been hit not once but three times by the hard and savage blows of Mother Nature.

Floridians are a hardy lot. Floridians have endured hurricanes before. Floridians will do it this time. In the meantime, let's have the Government do one of the things that it does best—respond to the needs of its people when the needs of the people are so desperate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that time charged under the quorum call be divided equally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for not more than 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

THE SITUATION IN RUSSIA: BACK IN THE USSR

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I have spoken often about Vladimir Putin's "creeping coup" against the forces of democracy and market capitalism in Russia. It is with regret that I note today that the coup is no longer creeping—it is running full steam ahead. President Putin is crassly using the horrific Beslan attack to consolidate autocratic rule. The people of Russia, no safer because of the Kremlin's power grab, will ultimately pay the price. Their freedom and the future of Russia as a democratic state are at stake.

The terrorist attack on a school in Beslan illustrated once again the ugly face of extremism that will stop at nothing—not even the deliberate killing of schoolchildren—in pursuit of its political aims. Like millions of others around the world, this terrible event moved my heart, and I offer my sympathy to the families who have suffered so grievously throughout the ordeal. As with all deaths in terrorist attacks, nothing anyone does can bring back the lost. It is the duty of political leaders to remember the fallen by taking steps to ensure that such attacks do not again occur.

And yet Mr. Putin chose the immediate aftermath of this attack not to address the root causes of Chechen terrorism, nor to take meaningful steps that would enhance the safety and security of the Russian people. Instead, he used the attack as an excuse—an excuse to consolidate power and further remove the Russian people from democracy.

President Putin has announced that, because Russia faces terrorist threats, significant changes within the government are required. In the broadest sense, he is right. In the midst of the Beslan hostage standoff, government officials repeatedly lied about what was happening inside the school. The military was unable to rescue people and could not coordinate a response. Furthermore, recent accounts indicate that during the near-simultaneous bombing of two Russian passenger aircraft, the suicide bombers bribed their way through checkpoints and onto the planes. These problems stem from the