

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1696) to provide tax relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, to provide incentives for charitable giving, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank Senate Finance Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for their extraordinary work, to so expeditiously draft this important legislation in a bipartisan manner. This package will provide immediate tax relief to those directly affected by this incredible disaster.

As we have rightfully focused on rescuing, reuniting and rebuilding, we must also make sure to take care of our strained military families. The first and best definition of patriotism is keeping faith with those who wear our uniform. That means giving our troops the resources they need to keep safe while they are keeping us safe. And it means supporting our troops at home as well as abroad.

More than 40 percent of military reservists and National Guard members suffer pay cut when they are called to defend our Nation, including those serving in the gulf coast today. These citizens serve nobly. They are much more than weekend warriors. Currently, there are over 140,000 reservists called up for active duty in the war against terrorism and over 10,000 of these reservists and guardsmen are from Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. Over 50,000 National Guard members have been called up to assist with Hurricane Katrina.

Many of these reservists are being hit with a double-whammy. After recent service in Iraq or Afghanistan, they are coming home to an area that has been devastated. The all-volunteer Army depends on these reservists. They have been serving our country with distinction and pride for many years, and should not be penalized financially for their honorable service.

Businesses on the gulf coast want to do the right thing for their employees. But in the wake of this disaster, most just can't afford it. This legislation will help businesses do the right thing. The bill will provide an employee retention credit which provides a 40 percent tax credit for wages paid up to \$6,000 after August 28, 2005 and before December 31, 2005. This credit will help employers in the gulf coast who pay employees that are not able to work because the business was either damaged or destroyed and pay reservists and guardsmen that worked for them right up to the time before they were deployed.

For the last couple of years, Senator LANDRIEU and I have worked on legislation to provide assistance to businesses that employ reservists who have been called up to active duty. That legislation would provide tax credits to em-

ployers who pay reservists wages that are above their military pay and to help with the costs of hiring replacement workers. I thank Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for working with me to include wages paid to eligible reservists and guardsmen as part of the employee retention tax credit.

The Hurricane Katrina tax relief legislation helps our reservists and the businesses that employ them to ensure that our great tradition of citizen soldiers does not fade or end because of the effect service can have on work and family in this time of crisis.

I am also pleased that this tax package has a set of provisions to encourage charitable giving. We have all been overwhelmed by the generosity and compassion of the American people, who have sacrificed their time and money, sent food and supplies south by the truckload, and even opened up their homes to strangers. This provision will make giving easier, particularly by allowing rollover contributions from IRA accounts.

This legislation is the right thing to do in the face of this disaster. It can help make sure our reservists' families don't have to sacrifice beyond their means while our brave men and women are away from home helping other families. This legislation can make it easier for the incomparable generosity of the American people to continue by easing some restrictions on charitable giving.

Again, I thank Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS for their efforts on this package.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, that the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the bill be held at the desk.

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

The amendment (No. 1722) was agreed to.

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

The bill (S. 1696), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as I said, I have another request I want to do for other Members.

SPORTFISHING AND RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2005

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3649, which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3649) to ensure funding for sportfishing and boating safety programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund through the end of fiscal year 2005, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, that the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 1723) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To make technical corrections to Public Law 109-59)

SEC. . CORRECTION OF DISTRIBUTION OF OBLIGATION AUTHORITY UNDER SECTION 1102(c)(4)(A) OF PUBLIC LAW 109-59.

Notwithstanding section 1102(c) (4) (A) of Public Law 109-59; 119 Stat. 1144, et seq., or any other provision of law, for fiscal year 2005, obligation authority for funds made available under title I of division H of Public Law 108-447; 118 Stat. 3216 for expenses necessary to discharge the functions of the Secretary of Transportation with respect to traffic and highway safety under chapter 301 of title 49, United States Code, and part C of subtitle VI of title 49, United States Code, shall be made available in an amount equal to the funds provided therein: Provided, That the additional obligation authority needed to meet the requirements of this section shall be withdrawn from the obligation authority previously distributed to the other programs, projects, and activities funded by the amount deducted under section 117 of title I of division H of Public Law 108-447.

The bill (H.R. 3649), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I was honored to join Majority Leader FRIST in cosponsoring S. Res. 238 recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrating the vast contributions of Hispanic Americans to the strength and culture of our Nation. S. Res. 238 passed the Senate by unanimous consent today, September 15, the kickoff of a month-long celebration and observation of Hispanic-American strength and culture in this country.

Diversity truly represents the best of America, a nation where each of us can be proud of our ancestry, our heritage, and our native language, yet a nation

where we at the same time can stand together with our neighbor, regardless of our own background, and all call ourselves Americans.

Hispanic Americans have much to be proud of and much to celebrate. I have said this before, but I am so proud to have been elected the first Cuban American in the Senate. I feel a great weight of responsibility in representing not only the Cuban-American community and the great State of Florida but in a way the entire Hispanic-American community in our country. I know my colleague from Colorado, Senator SALAZAR, must feel the same weight of responsibility. I am very honored to serve in this Senate with him.

As I like to say, in America, when you work hard and play by the rules, anything is possible. This year, Judge Alberto Gonzales was sworn in as our Attorney General.

Alberto Gonzales is the first Hispanic American to ever serve in one of the four elite Cabinet posts in Government—Defense, Treasury, State and Attorney General, which he now proudly occupies. He is an inspiration for our next generation. The second Cuban American to serve in the President's Cabinet also took office this year—Secretary Carlos Gutierrez at the Department of Commerce. I was proud to support both their nominations.

We have made great strides in breaking into the highest echelons of Government. And although I do not want to employ any litmus test of ethnicity, there would indeed be much to celebrate if our next Supreme Court nominee became the first Hispanic-American Justice of the Supreme Court.

Hispanic pride in our heritage has helped many look to their past for strength and use this strength to forge a better future for ourselves and our families in all facets of American life. Our achievements have greatly influenced America's policymaking, its economy, and the medical and artistic fields.

In fact, we should also point out that many Hispanic Americans proudly serve in our Armed Forces during this time of need. In fact, many have given their last measure of sacrifice, while others have suffered serious injuries.

But moving to other fields, now-deceased Cuban-American business leader and former chief executive officer of Coca-Cola Roberto Goizueta climbed the corporate ranks and helped Coca-Cola remain one of the premier brands around the world. Nobel Prize winner Severo Ochoa discovered the process that allows humans to create RNA in a test tube.

My close and personal friend, Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, became the first Hispanic-American woman and first Cuban-American to be elected to the U.S. Congress. And within the artistic field, Brazilian artist Romero Britto, whose concern for the youth of the world, combined with social and political sources, has had his work appear in over 60 national and international publications.

Just like throughout the Nation, the Hispanic community within Florida continues to grow rapidly, and our creativity and ingenuity keep contributing to American culture. Hispanic American and owner of NGI Solutions, Martha Korman, is making significant economic contributions to the greater Tampa area.

Puerto Ricans, like Orange County Commissioner Mildred Fernandez, climbed the ranks and is working to encourage homeownership and growth of small businesses in the Orlando region.

Like many other Hispanics, Cuban-American Gus Machado began with nothing but a dream and dedicated himself to his business and his community, making him today the owner of the number one Ford car dealerships in the Miami area. In Jacksonville, FL, Dr. Javier Garcia-Bengochea made his mark as the innovator of several instruments and systems used to improve spinal surgeries.

And in Florida, just this week, a young man named Marco Rubio was named the first Cuban-American Speaker in the Florida House of Representatives, and, I might add, the first Hispanic American. I know that he is going to be a great leader and voice for the State of Florida, and a great role model for our next generation of Hispanic Americans who want to make a difference.

We are proud to be Americans. We gladly stand together with all Americans of all races, creeds, and beliefs in this great country that we call home.

Our goal in observing Hispanic Heritage Month is not to set ourselves apart, but to ask our fellow citizens to join us in celebrating our culture, our heritage, and our achievements.

With great pride we celebrate the pioneers in our Nation and in Florida during this National Hispanic Heritage Month.

We pay tribute to America's diversity and honor the countless contributions Hispanics have made throughout the history of this great country.

And finally, we celebrate the values of the Hispanic-American community—family, faith, liberty, love of this country and love of our roots.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. 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. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, it has been 3 weeks since Hurricane

Katrina came ashore bringing with her a wide swath of damage. Her winds whipped structures to devastation, her rains destroyed thousands of agricultural crops, and, sadly, the force of this storm resulted in death.

While I rise to speak of Hurricane Katrina, I do want to focus my remarks on the devastation this storm brought to the State of Florida. We all know of the devastation on the Gulf Coast States of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Before that, Katrina paid a costly and deadly visit to the State of Florida. Florida suffered 14 deaths and over \$1 billion in damages.

The Governor declared a state of emergency and evacuations took place. As you may recall, last year, Florida was visited by four serious hurricanes. By the time Katrina hit, we already had received over 150 percent of the normal rainfall for the year. And more rain brought about a substantial amount of flooding.

Before Katrina came to Florida, we had been visited by, as I said, four hurricanes last year. Over 10 percent of Florida's homes were damaged. The storm displaced tens of thousands of people into shelters, and today over 20,000 Floridians are still living in some form of transitional housing.

The backlog of roof repair is so severe that we are sending our children to schools that are developing mold problems. Whole sectors of our agricultural industry are devastated. Frankly, it will take years to replant and nourish those crops.

I wish to take a few moments to mention that even though the people of my State are still recovering from the effects of Katrina and Dennis and Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne—even though folks are still living in trailers outside of their homes that have blue tarps on their roofs, Floridians are proudly pitching in to help the people of the gulf coast region.

Sarasota, FL, is sending teams of 140 trained Red Cross volunteers in 2-week cycles and in some cases longer than that. These volunteers are headed to the very areas where evacuees are streaming out. There is no power, no clean water, no hot showers. They are bringing evacuees back with them to Sarasota County—over 300 so far.

Early this week, I had occasion to visit the Red Cross center in Orlando. Over 200 people are volunteering their services there, as hundreds and expected thousands of evacuees are coming into that central Florida area, where they are finding that the hotel industry has made arrangements for them to receive temporary housing in the area of many hotels, and, at the same time, the community is pouring out their love and their care in helping find jobs and dealing with issues of physical as well as mental health, as well as incorporating children into the school system.

The Tampa Incident Management Group has sent 22 members to Hancock County, MS, where they have worked