

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Please indicate when 2 minutes are remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair is happy to do so.

KATRINA'S DISPLACED SCHOOLCHILDREN

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I will talk this morning about helping all of Katrina's displaced schoolchildren. Each weekend when I go home to Tennessee, the people who elected me teach me about how we should be doing our jobs in Washington, DC. This is not a lesson they shout from the rooftops. It is a lesson they live by their own example, and we would be wise to follow.

Two weeks ago in Maryville, my hometown, it was Al Gore flying a planeload of evacuees from New Orleans into one of Tennessee's most Republican counties. Nobody asked about anybody's politics. Everybody just pitched in to help.

Last weekend, members of the church where I am an elder, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, sent \$80,000 and a truckload of clothes and Clorox to southern Mississippi. "The Presbyterians are here," one grateful Mississippi man relayed to his friends on his cell phone to say, "and they have Clorox." When the Clorox was passed out, nobody asked if anybody was a Presbyterian.

And now this Sunday, the headline in the Tennessean, the Nashville newspaper, was:

Private schools Welcome Those Displaced by Katrina.

According to the newspaper:

A growing number of private schools in Middle Tennessee [in the Nashville area] . . . have volunteered to help students displaced by Katrina. Many of them are also waiving or drastically discounting tuition and fees for these students and some also accept evacuees from public schools.

Continuing the quote, "These children are in crisis. They have been displaced, but they have found a home," said the principal of Father Ryan High School who has accepted 20 students and is trying to accommodate every student who shows up.

Father Ryan High School is waiving the \$6,880 tuition, the \$350 activity fee, and the \$500 in books for displaced students it simply calls "transfers." "It's not all about money," said the principal. "There is no amount of money that equals being family," he said.

Public schools, by law, have to accept all children. And Tennessee's public schools have made room for more than 3,000 of Katrina's displaced school children.

Our public schools have been greatly helped by these private schools, who do not have to accept anybody. In Tennessee, private schools have accepted at least 400 students, and probably many more.

"We couldn't sit quietly and do nothing. We felt a need to reach out," said the headmaster of Webb school in Bell Buckle, which is waiving the \$29,500 room and board for up to 30 students. "No one flinched. Everybody just responded with, what can we do to help?" said the headmaster at Webb school in Bell Buckle.

Especially in Memphis and Shelby County, where so many displaced students have gone up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, the willingness of private schools to accept these students is a huge help to overcrowded public schools.

In Baton Rouge, according to a report this morning on National Public Radio, there are 5,000 to 10,000 of these displaced private school students who have no school to attend. To accommodate them, the Catholic Diocese in Baton Rouge is struggling to establish satellite schools, some located great distances away, which these students will have to attend at night.

These private schools that reach out are filling a huge need because the four Louisiana parishes hit the hardest had nearly one-third, or 61,000, of their 187,000 students in private schools, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

That is the story and the lesson from Tennessee.

The story in Washington last weekend, unfortunately, was different. According to Saturday's Washington Post, when the President proposed temporary emergency disaster legislation that would help all of Katrina's 372,000 displaced school children during the rest of this school year, the Senator from Massachusetts and some teachers' unions objected. Senator KENNEDY said:

I am extremely disappointed that [the President] has proposed this relief using such a politically charged approach. This is not [the] time for a partisan political debate on vouchers.

I absolutely agree with that last sentence. This is not the time for a partisan political debate on vouchers.

This is the time for those of us in the Senate to do what Tennesseans and Americans all across our country are doing: opening our arms and asking what we can do to help all displaced children not just some school children.

As the Presiding Officer knows so well, Katrina displaced 20 times more families than any natural disaster in the history of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Mr. President, 372,000 of those displaced persons are children who were just beginning the K-12 school year, and 73,000 more are college students.

The President has proposed \$2.6 billion in funding for students in elementary and secondary schools and colleges. Under the President's proposal, colleges and universities would receive \$1,000 for each displaced student enrolled; no person in an affected area in Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama would have to pay interest on their

student loans for the next 6 months; public school districts would receive up to 90 percent of the State's per-pupil expenditure, up to \$7,500 per student; and \$488 million would go to help displaced students who attend private schools.

The President is not throwing out a lifeline to just some displaced students. He is trying to help them all. The private schools in Tennessee are not turning their backs. They are opening their arms. Katrina did not discriminate among children and neither should we. The only politically charged approaches around here are coming from those who oppose helping every child.

For Heaven's sake, this is not the beginning of some big, new voucher program. It is the beginning, hopefully, of a big, new 1-year effort to help children who are in desperate trouble. The best way to do it, in most cases, is simply to let the money follow the child or the person who needs help.

We have already approved vouchers that follow displaced persons for housing in this exceptional case. Food stamps are vouchers, and they are helping in this exceptional case. No one is suggesting a displaced mother cannot take her Federal daycare voucher to a Catholic daycare center in these exceptional cases. No one is suggesting we cannot pay Boston College or Harvard University \$1,000 for enrolling a displaced student who was set to attend Loyola or Xavier in New Orleans.

Scholars agree there is no constitutional issue here. So are we going to stand here and argue about old ideologies and leave these displaced children standing on the levee because the only doors that are open to them for this 1 year happen to be to a private school?

At the end of World War II, a grateful Nation enacted the GI bill, giving veterans scholarships for college. A lot of veterans had these vouchers for college but no high school degree. So thousands of veterans took their GI vouchers to Catholic high schools to earn their high school diploma. That did not create a big, new voucher program for high schools, this will not either. This is a one year exceptional disaster relief program for kids from the gulf coast who desperately need help.

The public schools are brimming over. They need help from private schools. I hope those who are objecting to helping all displaced school children will think again. We can have our debates about vouchers next year when the floodwaters subside and the schools are open again. Right now we need to be throwing out every lifeline we can for all of Katrina's displaced schoolchildren, not just some.

Mr. President, in Time magazine this week, there is a story on this subject. It quotes Andrew Rotherman, a co-director of a think tank here and a former Clinton education adviser. Mr. Rotherman, who is not a fan of public school vouchers, says:

As a temporary initiative to help families in exceptional circumstances, it's reasonable.

He is talking about the President's proposal. He says:

But if they use this disaster as a beachhead to establish a longstanding voucher program in the Gulf region, it would be wildly inappropriate.

I would agree. This is a temporary initiative to help families in exceptional instances.

Time goes on to say:

For evacuees, the constitutionality of assistance matters far less than the assistance itself. The day before Katrina hit, Albert and Anne Betz moved with Jane Todd, 10, and Owen, 7, out of soon-to-be-drowned Pass Christian, Miss., and into a condo in Sandestin, Fla. Back home, Anne had taught at the children's private Episcopal school, but the couple heard that the best schools near Sandestin were public and were happy with the one to which their kids were assigned. Within days, however, Anne received a letter from the Walton County School District stating that the onslaught of evacuees had caused overcrowding, and her children would have to study elsewhere. Now they are bused daily to one school, only to be placed on a second bus to another. At this point, all Anne is asking for is normalcy. "It does not matter if it's private or public school," she says. "The most important thing is my children's happiness."

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the entire article from Time, and also the story from Sunday's Nashville Tennessean about the generosity of private schools all across Tennessee. I hope the example they are setting will be a good lesson for all of us in this Chamber.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From Time Magazine, Sept. 19, 2005]

PUBLIC BAILOUT. PRIVATE AGENDA?

(By David Van Biema)

Houston Independent School District superintendent Abelardo Saavedra's week started poorly, got worse and then, thanks to the healing powers of federal dollars, took a turn toward the jubilant. Saavedra's 305 schools are educating more of the Gulf Coast's evacuee students than any other district in Texas, which in turn is housing more evacuees than any other state. On Tuesday, all that generosity seemed to backfire when a group of Katrina kids billeted in the Astrodome rumbled with local Texans at one of Saavedra's schools, sending five students to jail and three to a hospital. The scene did not recur, but by Thursday, Saavedra had an even greater problem: math. The long-term cost of serving 4,700 evacuee students, times an average estimated annual student cost of \$7,500, equals a total of \$35.2 million—and the pre-hurricane Bush Administration commitment was only 9% of pupil cost.

On Friday, however, Saavedra was ecstatic. At a press conference in one of the Houston district's middle schools, Education Secretary Margaret Spellings announced that the Federal Government would request \$2.6 billion from Congress to pay 90% of the average cost of educating each Katrina student, whether publicly or privately, up to a ceiling of \$7,500 apiece. "From 9% to 90%," Saavedra said afterward, with the dazed elation of a lottery winner.

Spellings' announcement had a lot of school administrators smiling—although a

key component angered some of the legislators who will eventually have to vote on it. A proposed set-aside of \$488 million for private schools (which, if private-leaning evacuees seek out the kind of education they left behind, would be mostly Catholic) represents a historic federal bankrolling of those institutions and their overtly religious subset, and it drew quick fire from Democrats like Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy. He pronounced himself "disappointed" that "[Bush] has proposed. . . relief using such a politically charged approach," while California Representative George Miller complained that "to launch a new private-school voucher program in the midst of a disaster response creates a quagmire that could hinder rather than expedite the return to school for tens of thousands of students."

The ramifications of Spellings' bombshell will take months, if not years, to sort out, but most agree that a major federal foray into emergency school funding was desperately needed. The fate of 372,000 displaced children is at least as important to the nation as the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast, and unlike the payment of rebuilding costs, education isn't a choice—it's a government guarantee. Yet for days it appeared the feds might foist much of the obligation on state school systems, 47 of which are hosting Katrina students. Most evaluated the problem and decided to teach first and ask questions later. "If that 6-year-old kid coming off that transport plane was yours, how would you want him taken care of?" Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee asked TIME. Huckabee hopes for federal reimbursement, "but if not, we will have done the right thing, and I believe we will have no regrets about how we handled matters."

But Huckabee was tutoring only 1,755 Katrina kids. Texas has 41,000, with 19,000 more expected to arrive. Those numbers left some state officials skeptical that the feds would really come through. Comptroller Carole Strayhorn, who will run against incumbent Rick Perry in the state's Republican gubernatorial primary, challenged him to ask the legislature for \$1.2 billion in hurricane-related funds. (He declined.) Texas educators are worried that they will be punished in the form of even less federal cash if Katrina's influx keeps them from meeting the conditions of Bush's No Child Left Behind Act and an earlier law that benefits the children of the homeless.

Spellings' proposal eased those tensions while creating others, most sharply over the possible erosion of the church-and-state barrier. Her department noted that in Louisiana's flood-impacted communities, 25% of the students had been enrolled in private schools—should government simply ignore them? "We are not provoking a voucher debate," Spellings contended, "as much as trying to provide aid for these displaced families, whether they have been in private schools or public schools." Her proposal seems carefully crafted to avoid substantive constitutional objections. Although it calls for the distribution of the public-school funds primarily through districts, the private-school money is directed not to schools but to families, in keeping with the concerns of the 2002 Supreme Court decision allowing private-school vouchers so long as the parents retain a "true private choice" as to where their children learn.

Nonetheless, the proposal represents a major, if legal, shift toward government activism. According to Chester E. Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, which promotes school reforms, the number of children receiving government money for private school is roughly 30,000, with a "handful" involving federal funds. The Spellings plan assumes roughly 60,000

federally funded private-school placements. Finn, an Assistant Education Secretary under Ronald Reagan, approves of it as "compassionate and constitutional." Andrew Rotherman, a co-director of a think tank called the Education Sector and a former Clinton education adviser, says the proposal's eventual legitimacy may depend on details Spellings has not yet made available. "As a temporary initiative to help families in exceptional circumstances, it's reasonable," he says. "But if they use this disaster as a beachhead to establish a longstanding voucher program in the Gulf [Coast] region, it would be wildly inappropriate."

For evacuees, the constitutionality of assistance matters far less than the assistance itself. The day before Katrina hit, Albert and Anne Betz moved with Jane Todd, 10, and Owen, 7, out of soon-to-be drowned Pass Christian, Miss., and into a condo in Sandestin, Fla. Back home, Anne had taught at the children's private Episcopal school, but the couple heard that the best schools near Sandestin were public and were happy with the one to which their kids were assigned. Within days, however, Anne received a letter from the Walton County School District stating that the onslaught of evacuees had caused overcrowding, and her children would have to study elsewhere. Now they are bused daily to one school, only to be placed on a second bus to another. At this point, all Anne is asking for is normalcy. "It does not matter if it's private or public school," she says. "The most important thing is my children's happiness."

[From the Tennessean, Sept. 18, 2005]

PRIVATE SCHOOLS WELCOME THOSE DISPLACED
BY KATRINA

(By Claudette Riley)

Teresa Castellon is more than 500 miles from her parents, her friends, her flooded New Orleans home and the now-closed private school she was attending just three weeks ago.

The sophomore was eager to go back to class. But, after years of going to private schools—and with so much of the rest of her life up in the air—she just couldn't handle making the switch to public schools right now.

Luckily, she didn't have to.

A growing number of private schools in Middle Tennessee, including the prestigious Webb School that Teresa now attends, have volunteered to accept students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Many of them also are either waiving or drastically discounting tuition and fees for these students, and some also accept evacuees from public schools.

"It just happened immediately. They're just really welcoming and accepting," said Teresa, 15, one of four evacuees now attending the private boarding school for grades 6-12. "The students and teachers are very nice and always want to help us with whatever we need."

At least 50 private schools in Tennessee—including the 22 Catholic elementary, middle and high schools in the Midstate—have expressed a willingness to help. No one is required to track displaced students who enroll in private schools statewide, but 390 have enrolled in the dozen or so schools that reported their numbers to the state Department of Education.

Some schools have room only for a few. Others, including Father Ryan High School in Nashville, are trying to accommodate all who show up.

"Our school's mission is to be an example of the living gospel, and these children are in crisis. They have been displaced, but they have found a home," said Jim McIntyre, principal of the 995-student Father Ryan

High, which has 20 displaced students. "Even though we don't know these people, we know these people. We are these people."

The high school is waiving the \$6,880 tuition, the \$350 activity fee and the \$400 to \$600 in books for displaced students it simply calls "transfers."

"It's not all about money. There's no amount of money that equals being family," he said, noting that the school has accepted Catholic and non-Catholic students. "I've told these families that they're a blessing to us because they're giving us a chance to live our mission."

Private schools don't fall under the federal law that requires public schools to immediately enroll displaced students and give them busing, free meals and any required services. However, many private schools are opening their doors and going the extra mile anyway.

"We couldn't sit quietly and do nothing. We felt a need to reach out," said Albert Cauz, headmaster of Webb School, which is waiving the \$29,500 room and board for up to 30 students. "No one flinched. Everybody just responded with 'What can we do to help?'"

The boarding school south of Nashville even allowed Teresa Castellon's little sister, Madeline, to stay in her private dorm room even though she's too young to attend the school. The fourth-grader attends nearby Cascade Elementary and has found a surrogate family in the Webb faculty members, who regularly invite her to dinner and take her on outings.

"I like it here," said Madeline, 9, who misses her parents, involved in salvaging and rebuilding their home in New Orleans.

The private schools that do reach out are filling a huge need because the four Louisiana parishes hardest hit by the storm had an above-average number of students enrolled in private school. They had 61,000 of the 187,000 students there, or roughly 32% of students in kindergarten through grade 12, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Shane Persich, 17, said his New Orleans school, Brother Martin High, is underwater and he appreciated being able to go to Father Ryan. He started his senior year at the all-boys school shortly before his family evacuated and ended up in Nashville, where they're staying with family.

"I like it a lot but sometimes after class you get a little lonely. I do. And you want to go home but then you don't want to be home," he said, adding that his home has severe wind damage. "Your senior year you're supposed to rule the school. Now it's like starting all over again."

Many displaced students who enroll in private and public schools don't have access to their medical or academic records so counselors have to help them reconstruct their transcripts and find classes they need to graduate.

"We want to get their schedule identical to the one they had. We don't know if they're going to be here on week, two weeks or a year," said Connie Hansom, Father Ryan's director of admission, who assigns two students ambassadors to help each displaced student. "We do whatever we can do to make them feel a part. We don't want them to stand out."

Olivia Milton, a sophomore at Father Ryan, will soon return to Covington, La, because her all-girls Catholic high school is reopening and taking in students from surrounding high schools. She said her time at Father Ryan and the way she was welcomed will help her reach out to the displaced students who transfer into her high school back home.

"I'll get to return the favor," said Olivia, 15, who will be back in Louisiana in the com-

ing weeks. "I like it a lot here. I don't want to go back."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, on Thursday, at 3 o'clock, the Education Subcommittee of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will be holding a hearing on helping all of Katrina's displaced schoolchildren, with the hopes that we can come up with a temporary exceptional way to do this, not as a way of establishing a long-term change in Federal policy, but as a way of helping all schoolchildren today who were displaced by Katrina who need help—whether they are going to public schools or private schools.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, we have all been saddened to see the images of Hurricane Katrina's devastation. I know the Presiding Officer has seen more of these images than perhaps anyone in the Senate. We have seen images of children who have lost their parents and families who have lost their homes. These images break the heart of every American.

Hurricane Katrina created an area of destruction that is 90,000 square miles, roughly the size of Great Britain. Homes have been leveled, roads are unusable, bridges have crumbled, and hundreds of thousands of lives will be forever changed.

As the chairman of the Commerce Committee's Disaster Prediction and Prevention Subcommittee, I traveled with the Coast Guard to the gulf coast earlier this month. We viewed the coasts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

What became immediately clear to me was that television cannot accurately convey what happened. The devastation is massive and comprehensive. Seeing a home demolished on television begins to communicate the tragedy, but seeing 60 to 70 miles of that repeated over and over again is heart-breaking and almost impossible to comprehend.

As we can see from these slides, beginning in New Orleans, during the helicopter trip, from a distance, we could see the waters covering everywhere. From a few feet above the water, you could also smell the contamination from oil and sewage. It is unbelievable what the folks there are having to deal with.

To continue, at the time, the water was still up to the rooftops. The Coast Guard captain who was with me told me when they first arrived the day after the hurricane, about 70 percent of these roofs had people on them who needed to be rescued.

We became very aware that we had two disasters: in New Orleans, continued flooding; and along the entire coast of Mississippi, it was as though a hand had wiped everything off a table. Everything was completely destroyed.

Not a house along the beaches was either there or inhabitable. And we continued to see the same thing all along the coast.

Again, television can capture one or two homes, but the concretelike "gravestones" showed where homes used to be, and trees are already dying from the saltwater, which will damage the whole coastal area for many years to come.

These are completely different disasters and different challenges for our first responders.

In Mississippi, the houses themselves have been demolished by the wind and storm, as we can see. In New Orleans, the flooding has severely damaged the homes.

One thing both locations have in common is that the homes will never again be inhabitable. The wind-damaged homes, those that still stand, will likely be declared a complete loss.

In New Orleans, the homes that were flooded are permanently damaged and are beyond repair.

One of the positive stories that is often lost in this tragedy is the amazing work performed by first responders, especially those from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Working hours on end in awful conditions, they rescued thousands of people and are, without question, true heroes. I visited the Coast Guard aviation training center in Mobile, AL, which was transformed from a few hundred personnel before the storm to nearly 1,200 personnel after the storm. The Coast Guard sent people from all around the Nation to run rescue operations 24 hours a day. Coast Guardsmen from all over the Nation, as far away as Alaska, answered the call and came to the rescue of their fellow citizens. To date, first responders have been responsible for saving approximately 49,000 lives, 33,000 by the Coast Guard alone. That is more than six times the number they saved in all of 2004.

The impact to the coast is going to be a long-term issue. The storm has had a significant impact on the trees in the region. You can see significant portions of the area along the coastline where trees are dead. These trees were a natural obstacle to erosion, and now that protection will be missing for a number of years. Boats can be seen among the trees far inland. The gulf coast is our Nation's largest provider of shrimp and oysters. Their way of life has been destroyed. It was clear from the boats I saw stranded inland, sometimes on rooftops, that the gulf's fishing industry will need years to recover. But while Hurricane Katrina was certainly one of the worst disasters to ever hit our Nation, it has also brought out the greatest outpouring of compassion from American citizens.

In my State of South Carolina, families have opened their wallets and homes to affected people. Our State knows all too well the tragic effects hurricanes can bring, and we have often been the recipient of help from

other States. We remember the show of support from the gulf when we were struck by Hurricane Hugo, and South Carolinians have not been hesitant to come to the gulf's rescue. Well over 2,000 South Carolina families have contacted our Red Cross to offer whatever assistance is needed. It is now estimated that up to 5,000 evacuees are being hosted in South Carolina, either by individual families or in shelters such as the Palmetto Expo Center in Greenville.

The South Carolina National Guard has also joined in the relief effort. Nearly 350 of them have been to the gulf to help. Countless churches and civic organizations have taken their own initiatives to organize relief efforts. From fundraising drives to collections and delivery of supplies, to driving to the region to volunteer in any capacity needed, the people of South Carolina have risen to the occasion. This show of support is so encouraging to me about our State and the state of our Nation. Americans are caring and compassionate, and we will work side by side with our fellow citizens to rebuild and bring hope back to the gulf coast.

This afternoon my Subcommittee on Disaster Prevention and Prediction will be hearing from the Director of the National Hurricane Center and witnesses from the gulf coast region on what the Government got right in advance of the storm and how we can replicate that in the future to protect our Nation's coastal communities. Our most powerful defense against hurricanes is accurate prediction and effective evacuation. I look forward to their testimony and am confident it will provide important lessons for America's emergency planners.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2744, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2744) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food

and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Bennett-Kohl amendment No. 1726, to amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936.

Reid (for Nelson of Nebraska) amendment No. 1732, to prohibit the use of funds for developing a final rule with respect to the importation of beef from Japan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

AMENDMENT NO. 1732

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise to speak about efforts to resume normal beef trading relationships with Japan. I thank my colleagues from my neighboring beef States for their leadership and support and so many others for their efforts in seeking a bipartisan resolution to this matter.

As I travel through Nebraska, attending events and participating in summer parades throughout the largely rural landscape, I am constantly reminded of the importance of our beef industry. Prominently displayed on many vintage cars and pickup trucks are generic black and yellow license plates that boast a clear message—"Nebraska, the Beef State." While it is unlikely any modern day automobile in Nebraska now or in the future will sport that yellow and black plate of old, our billboard slogan, "the Beef State," is still the message people equate with Nebraska.

I am here to address an important amendment that will suspend the rule-making process the United States Department of Agriculture has proposed and published in the August 18, 2005 printing of the Federal Register in a rule entitled "Importation of Whole Cuts of Boneless Beef from Japan." The formal public comment period was closed yesterday so prompt Senate action is imperative. At the time the rule was published, the Nebraska Cattlemen, a grassroots organization whose individual producer members determine issues of importance to the Nebraska beef industry, wrote to me to request a stepped-up effort to convince Japan to resume imports of United States beef. In their letter they stated:

[n]ormalization of beef trade must be progressively pursued because it impacts the state's economy and because responsible trading partners treat each other fairly and justly.

The letter continues:

[t]rade should not be based on politics and protectionism.

I couldn't agree more. Trade must be based on fair play. Free trade must include a vision of fair trade. I am going to step back a moment to state why this is so important to me and the hard-working cattle producers and beef processors in my State. In the beef State, cattle outnumber people four to one and more than one of every five steaks and hamburgers in the Nation comes from my State. According to USDA, Nebraska ranks first in commercial cattle slaughter, processing over 4 million metric tons of beef and

beef products in 2004. Nationally, the numbers are even more compelling. The U.S. beef industry is worth an estimated \$175 billion, with cattle producers conducting business in all 50 States and operating 800,000 individual farms and ranches. The economic impact of the beef industry contributes to nearly every county in the Nation, and they are a significant economic driver in rural communities.

Demand for beef continues to increase, up nearly 20 percent since 1998. With 94.9 million cattle reported to be in the United States as of January 2004, there are 1.4 million jobs directly attributed to the beef industry. It is not a surprise that both the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and R-Calf United Stockgrowers of America have weighed in on the significance of their industry and the importance of having access to valuable markets throughout the world. With beef and beef variety meat exports accounting for approximately \$3.8 billion in 2003 alone, it is important to recognize NCBA's and R-CALF USA's statements on the USDA proposed rule that is the subject of my amendment.

On August 22, R-CALF USA stated that this is an example of "USDA tilting the playing field away from independent U.S. cattle producers by continuing to give market access before we gain market access."

I ask unanimous consent that the R-CALF USA statement be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

R-CALF UNITED STOCKGROWERS OF AMERICA APHIS' PLAN TO LIFT JAPAN BEEF BAN PREMATURE

R-CALF USA expressed disappointment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) proposed rule titled "Importation of Whole Cuts of Boneless Beef from Japan," published in Thursday's Federal Register (70 Fed. Reg. 48,494) to amend the agency's regulation for the importation of meat and other edible animal products that would allow Japan to export boneless cuts of beef to the United States.

"This is another example of the USDA tilting the playing field away from independent U.S. cattle producers by continuing to give market access before we gain market access," said R-CALF USA President and Co-Founder Leo McDonnell.

"In addition, USDA has yet to implement the scientifically recommended measures to prevent the potential for BSE amplification if it is introduced through imports," said Missouri veterinarian and R-CALF USA Region VI Director Max Thornsberry. "USDA's own scientists have strongly and consistently advised the agency to strengthen the U.S. feed ban by prohibiting plate waste from cattle feed before the U.S. lifts its ban on imported beef from any country where BSE exists."

Thornsberry, who also chairs the R-CALF USA Animal Health Committee, explained that the plate waste loophole would allow the uneaten portions of imported beef from BSE affected countries served at domestic restaurants to potentially enter the food chain for U.S. cattle. Although Japan currently performs a BSE test on all cattle