

we live up to what the President said a week ago. This is not even bold action. This is continuing to do what we have been doing in the last year. It is not too much to ask. It is time that we made the comfortable a little bit uncomfortable so we can give some comfort to those who are uncomfortable.

We will be voting on this tomorrow. I hope that Senators will not be swayed by this, "Well, we cannot do this because the House has gone home." Well, let us comfort the uncomfortable. Let us tell the poorest of the poor we are not going to leave them in the lurch, we are not going to cut them by 50 percent, and let us have them come back and fix this tomorrow night. They can do it.

I appreciate the indulgence of the occupant of the chair for allowing me to talk about my amendment because I will not have much time in the morning. I only have 30 minutes. Some other people may want to talk. I know no one is here. I hope some people may be watching and taking heed of this. I will be back tomorrow morning, in a more succinct manner, obviously, to lay out this case on why we have to adopt an amendment to keep the community services block grants at last year's level.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the Senator from Iowa, Senator HARKIN, has come to the floor to offer an amendment that makes reference to the community services block grant funding and the possibility that if we pass a continuing resolution without adequately funding this program, communities all across America will be denied some basic funds they need.

I have made a point, as I travel around my State of Illinois, of asking village presidents and mayors and leaders how this money is used. It turns out to be money that is essential for many programs. It is one of the most unusual programs in that there is such a wide variety of things that are done with these dollars by communities, from afterschool programs for children at risk to programs for senior citizens that are essential for their well-being.

I am sorry I wasn't here earlier to join with Senator HARKIN, but I come to the floor in support of his effort. America can do better. We can make certain that we fund these essential programs so that the vulnerable across America are not left behind. If we focus on this, as we should have before Hurricane Katrina—and we will in the fu-

ture—it is going to be a stronger nation.

I want to make sure my voice is added to that of Senator HARKIN in support of this valuable program.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REIMBURSING CHARITABLE WORK

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, earlier this week the Washington Post reported that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was making plans to "reimburse churches and other organizations that have opened their doors to provide shelter, food and supplies to survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

I understand FEMA's good intentions here, but we need to be very careful. There may be extraordinary circumstances when FEMA may need to rent buildings that might happen to belong to a church or mosque or synagogue. And I understand that under both Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, there have been appropriate ways to provide charitable choice and to fund faith-based organizations. I support that. I am currently working with Senators on both sides of the aisle on our Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on legislation to help all of Katrina's 372,000 displaced schoolchildren, including some who are enrolled in private and even religious schools. But the kind of reimbursement described in the Washington Post article makes me want to waive three yellow flags and two red ones.

One obvious concern is constitutional. The first amendment says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Paying churches for work they choose to undertake as churches raises obvious questions. That is not my major concern. My major concern is making sure that we honor what it has always meant in America to be a volunteer, to be charitable, and to respect our religious traditions.

When Jesus fed the loaves and the fishes to the multitude of 5,000, he didn't send the bill to Caesar. As Americans with a strong religious tradition,

we believe in helping our neighbors. In the book of Mark, Jesus tells us to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" and to "love their neighbor as thyself." This idea of loving and caring for our neighbors is not limited to Christianity. Jesus himself drew the commands to love God and love our neighbor from the Old Testament in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. I don't ever remember reading: "Love God, love your neighbor, and send the bill to Washington for the expenses."

From pioneer days, volunteering and helping our neighbors has been an essential part of the American character. No other country in the world has anything similar to what we have in their traditions. They do not give as we give. They do not have that same spirit. It is one of the things that makes this a unique country. Our forefathers would be dumbfounded to think that if a neighbor's barn burned down and the community joined together to rebuild it, that they would expect a check from Washington, DC to pay them back.

In that same Washington Post article, Reverend Robert E. Reccord of the Southern Baptist Convention helped put this in balance when he said:

Volunteer labor is just that: volunteer. We would never ask the government to pay for it.

At my church in Nashville, Westminster Presbyterian, where I am an elder, we took up a collection for the victims of Katrina and raised about \$80,000 in cash. We then filled up the parlor in the church with other things that we were told they needed in southern Mississippi. We loaded up a truck with diapers and Clorox and other necessities, and our associate pastor went down there with that truck for a few weeks to help people in need. Are we now supposed to send the Federal Government a bill for the food and the supplies and three weeks of the pastor's salary? Of course not. No one in our church expects that, nor should they.

So churches and synagogues and mosques and religious organizations that are being good neighbors aren't looking for a Government handout. They are looking to lend a hand. We should respect them. We should thank them. We should honor them. They are performing an invaluable service. We encourage them by providing tax incentives for charitable giving. But we should also remember that virtue is often its own reward and that some rewards are in heaven, and we should be very careful before we start reimbursing churches for their charity.

I ask unanimous consent that the article from the Washington Post to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, September 27, 2005]

FEMA PLANS TO REIMBURSE FAITH GROUPS FOR AID—AS CIVIL LIBERTARIANS OBJECT, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WEIGH WHETHER TO APPLY

(By Alan Cooperman and Elizabeth Williamson)

After weeks of prodding by Republican lawmakers and the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said yesterday that it will use taxpayer money to reimburse churches and other religious organizations that have opened their doors to provide shelter, food and supplies to survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

FEMA officials said it would mark the first time that the government has made large-scale payments to religious groups for helping to cope with a domestic natural disaster.

"I believe it's appropriate for the federal government to assist the faith community because of the scale and scope of the effort of how long it's lasting," said Joe Becker, senior vice president for preparedness and response with the Red Cross.

Civil liberties groups called the decision a violation of the traditional boundary between church and state, accusing FEMA of trying to restore its battered reputation by playing to religious conservatives.

"What really frosts me about all this is, here is an administration that didn't do its job and now is trying to dig itself out by making right-wing groups happy," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

FEMA officials said religious organizations would be eligible for payments only if they operated emergency shelters, food distribution centers for medical facilities at the request of state or local governments in the three states that have declared emergencies—Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. In those cases, "a wide range of costs would be available for reimbursement, including labor costs incurred in excess of normal operations, rent for the facility and delivery of essential needs like food and water," FEMA spokesman Eugene Kinerney said in an e-mail.

For churches, synagogues and mosques that have taken in hurricane survivors, FEMA's decision presents a quandary. Some said they were eager to get the money and had begun tallying their costs, from electric bills to worn carpets. Others said they probably would not apply for the funds, fearing donations would dry up if the public came to believe they were receiving government handouts.

"Volunteer labor is just that: volunteer," said the Rev. Robert E. Reccord, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board. "We would never ask the government to pay for it."

When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, religious charities rushed in to provide emergency services, often acting more quickly and efficiently than the government. Relief workers in the stricken states estimate that 500,000 people have taken refuge in facilities run by religious groups.

In the days after the disaster, house Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) and other Republicans complained that FEMA seemed reluctant to pay church groups. "There are tons of questions about what is reimbursable, what is not reimbursable," DeLay said Sept. 13, noting that Houston alone had "500 or 600 churches that took in evacuees, and they would get no reimbursement."

Becker said he and his staff at the Red Cross also urged FEMA to allow reimbursement of religious groups. Ordinarily, Becker

said, churches provide shelter for the first days after a disaster, then the Red Cross takes over. But in a storm season that has stretched every Red Cross shelter to the breaking point, church buildings must for the first time house evacuees indefinitely.

Even so, Lynn, of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said that federal reimbursement is inappropriate.

"The good news is that this work is being done now, but I don't think a lot of people realize that a lot of these organizations are actively working to obtain federal funds. That's a strange definition of charity," he said.

Lynn added that he accepts the need for the government to coordinate with religious groups in a major disaster, but not to "pay for their good works."

"We've never complained about using a religious organization as a distribution point for food or clothing or anything else," Lynn said. But "direct cash reimbursements would be unprecedented."

FEMA outlined the policy in a Sept. 9 internal memorandum on "Eligible Costs for Emergency Sheltering Declarations." Religious groups, like secular nonprofit groups, will have to document their costs and file for reimbursement from state and local emergency management agencies, which in turn will seek funds from FEMA.

David Fukitomi, infrastructure coordinator for FEMA in Louisiana, said that the organization has begun briefings for potential applicants in the disaster area but that it is too early to know how many will take advantage of the program.

"The need was so overwhelming that the faith-based groups stepped up, and we're trying to find a way to help them shoulder some of the burden for doing the right thing," he said, adding that "the churches are interested" but that "part of our effort is getting the local governments to be interested in being their sponsor."

A spokeswoman for the Salvation Army said it has been in talks with state and federal officials about reimbursement for the 76,000 nights of shelter it has provided to Katrina survivors so far. But it is still unclear whether the Salvation Army will qualify, she said.

The Rev. Flip Benham, director of Operation Save America, an antiabortion group formerly known as Operation Rescue, said, "Separation of church and state means nothing in time of disaster; you see immediately what a farce it is."

Benham said that his group has been dispensing food and clothing and that "Bibles and tracts go out with everything we put out." In Mendenhall, Miss., he said, he preached to evacuees while the mayor directed traffic and the sheriff put inmates from the county jail to work handing out supplies.

Yet Benham said he would never accept a dime from the federal government. "The people have been so generous to give that for us to ask for reimbursement would be like gouging for gas," he said. "That would be a crime against heaven."

For some individual churches, however, reimbursement is very appealing. At Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Ocean Springs, Miss., as many as 200 evacuees and volunteer workers have been sleeping each night in the sanctuary and Sunday School classrooms. The church's entrance hall is a Red Cross reception area and medical clinic. As many as 400 people a day are eating in the fellowship hall.

Suzie Harvey, the parish administrator, said the church was asked by the Red Cross and local officials to serve as a shelter. The church's leadership agreed immediately, without anticipating that nearly a quarter of

its 650 members would be rendered homeless and in no position to contribute funds. "This was just something we had to do," she said. "Later we realized we have no income coming in."

Harvy said the electric bill has skyrocketed, water is being used round-the-clock and there has been "20 years of wear on the carpet in one month." When FEMA makes money available, she said, the church definitely will apply.

REMEMBRANCES OF SAM VOLPENTEST

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise this evening to share the very sad news that Sam Volpentest—a name many of us in Congress know well—passed away last night at the age of 101.

Here in our Nation's Capital, Sam was a near constant fixture—always searching for new ways to help his beloved community of the Tri-Cities to move forward.

To fully appreciate Sam's contributions, you have to understand something about the geography and history of my State. The Tri-Cities—which are Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick—are located on the Columbia River in the southeastern region of Washington State.

From the Hanford nuclear facility, to the pristine beauty of the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River, to the many varied agricultural and business challenges, the Tri-Cities are diverse and very unique.

Located across the Cascade Mountains from Seattle and other population centers, it could be pretty easy for these three communities to have their needs overlooked.

Well, Sam made sure that never happened.

Whenever something important was happening in the Tri-Cities, I could always count on Sam to show up in my Senate office to share it with me, even if I didn't know he was coming.

I vividly remember many years ago when the chair of the Energy Committee cut funding for the construction of HAMMER. HAMMER is a world-class training facility located in Richland, WA.

Well, I like to think I am always on top of the issues affecting my home State, but Sam kept me on my toes. I showed up at my office one morning at about 7:30 a.m. Guess who was already there, standing there, waiting for me outside my door. Sam Volpentest.

Although Sam may have only had about an inch or two on me, that man's passion could move mountains. And on that day, his passion was for building HAMMER.

Well, I didn't want to mess with Sam, so I marched right into that Energy Committee chairman's office, and I fought side by side with Sam to restore those cuts. And we won.

I was proud to stand with Sam at the HAMMER groundbreaking ceremony in July of 1995. Sam was 91 years young at that time. I still have that shovel on display in my office as a reminder of