

take care of each other. We provided funds from all over the country to help New York rebuild, just as we did after the Northridge earthquake in California, just as we did after hurricanes in Florida, just as we did after forest fires in the West, just as we did after the great floods in the Middle West.

There has never been a disaster of the dimension of what we are facing along the gulf coast. I believe I have a small bit of understanding and empathy because of what we went through in New York for what my colleagues, Senator VITTER and Senator LANDRIEU, are facing. But what is becoming clear to me is that there is an effort underway to make the recovery along the gulf coast much more difficult than it needs to be.

I have been stunned at some of the demands that I hear coming from some of those in the Congress about what is expected from the people along the gulf coast and what kinds of funds can be made available to them. Like many people, I have been touched, moved, and impressed by the passion and eloquence of my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU. She has valiantly fought for the people who placed their trust in her to come to this Capitol and represent them in good times and bad. We are in a bad time. The people in Louisiana and along the gulf coast need champions. But no matter how eloquent a single Senator is or two Senators might be from a single State, they need support on both sides of the aisle and on both ends of the Capitol.

We are about to be presented with legislation that for the life of me I cannot understand. This legislation in law discriminates against the gulf coast. It says, for the first time ever, we will put conditions on the Federal money that goes through FEMA to the people and businesses of the gulf coast.

Mr. BYRD. Shame. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. We will require that the money be repaid. As Senator LANDRIEU has said in this Chamber: It is a little bit of a catch-22, isn't it? You say to hard-pressed sheriffs offices in parishes, to municipal governments in towns and in New Orleans and along the gulf coast, you say to them: You must repay this money. So before you borrow it to keep your police and your fire departments up and going, before you borrow it to have your public utility departments begin to do the work they need to to get the reimbursement they require, you must have a plan in place to repay it.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. I am bewildered. I don't understand why we are turning the people of the gulf coast into second-class citizens.

After 9/11, in addition to the normal disaster relief funds provided in the wake of that tragedy, the Federal Government designated \$20 billion to assist the New York City area. This was the first time FEMA received authority of this type to reimburse the city and the

State for associated costs that could not otherwise have received money under the Stafford Act. This was an unusual action taken at an unusual time. We had the strong support of then-chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator JEFFORDS, because 9/11 happened in that window when the Democrats were in the majority in the Senate. Chairman Jeffords stood with us to make sure we got what we needed without discriminating against New York City, without telling New Yorkers: You are just going to have to figure out how you are going to repay it, when you are not even sure there is another attack coming or what is going to be occurring in the future.

Mr. President, we are again facing an unusual time. Hurricane Katrina, and then, of course, Hurricane Rita, devastated New Orleans and the surrounding areas. The people of this region deserve our full support. Instead of providing that support and helping these communities meet their needs, the proposal before us actually restricts their access to funds by preventing them from using principal forgiveness authorities that are part of current law.

I know this has been presented apparently by the leadership in the House as a take-it-or-leave-it deal. I know what a difficult position that puts our two Senators from Louisiana in because they are basically being told you can leave here with \$750 million with discriminatory conditions on it that make your people second-class citizens compared to everybody else, or you can leave with nothing. Well, that is a Hobson's choice if there ever was one.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Bring nothing home or bring something that is not going to help your hospitals, is not available to many communities because they are not going to be able to borrow it in the first place because they cannot repay it.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. I came from a meeting where a number of business executives along the gulf coast are desperately trying to figure out what they are going to do. Entergy in New Orleans has just taken bankruptcy. They said if they have to put the costs they are accruing into the rate base—which they have to do under these circumstances—rates are going to rise 200 percent.

What are people with no jobs and no businesses—and we will not even give them an unemployment compensation extension, we will not pass the Medicaid emergency application process which we used in New York—going to do? We had a one-page Medicaid eligibility program that got people back into a position where they could get their health needs met. We are not doing any of that for people along the gulf.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I have the deepest sympathy for my col-

leagues from Louisiana. They are between a rock and a hard place.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. Go home with nothing or go home with a bad deal.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. And a deal that has never been inflicted on any other city, State, or region in our country.

Mr. BYRD. What a shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. Finally, Mr. President, this is all being done in the name of the deficit. I know, I read the papers. We have a lot of people who have discovered the deficit up here.

Mr. BYRD. Cut the funds for Iraq.

Mrs. CLINTON. There are a lot of other alternatives than imposing discriminatory conditions on the American people—the American people along the gulf coast.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, together we can do better than this. A strong America begins at home.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

Mrs. CLINTON. And we should owe our highest allegiance to the people who are in this country. And before we extend 100 billion more dollars in tax cuts, and before we continue to run up this deficit by funding the war and all of the other associated expenses, let's get some responsibility back here and let's treat the people of the gulf coast with the respect and dignity they deserve.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BYRD. Hear hear.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Hear hear.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

COMMUNITY DISASTER LOAN ACT OF 2005

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 1858, the Vitter bill, which is at the desk, that the bill be read three times, passed, and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let the Record be spread with my admiration for the senior Senator from the State of Louisiana for her tireless work on behalf of the people of Louisiana. I think most all of us would agree that this bill is imperfect, and that is an understatement. But I so appreciate the enthusiasm, the diligence, the hard work of my friend from the State of Louisiana, Senator LANDRIEU.

Also, once this bill passes—and it will pass—I think the focus then moves to the other side of the Capitol. I hope those people who are listening to this who have connections with the administration would assist us in getting the House to do the right thing: not only pass what we have done here, but hopefully take out this provision which I

think is different than the people of the State of Louisiana thought they would get.

I hope that by the time the House closes business today, we have a better product than what we have here. I also think it is important for me, having expressed my appreciation to the Senator from Louisiana—I acknowledged the senior Senator, but I acknowledge the work of the junior Senator from Louisiana. They have worked together. I understand that. It is a difficult situation in which we find ourselves based on that storm none of us anticipated, at least I did not.

We are going to have to continue to work our way through this. Even though the devastation of the storm has left the mind's eye of most people momentarily—and it is only momentarily—it is so easy to conjure up in our minds the images we saw—we simply need to help those people who have been forced to leave their homes and take their children to other places.

It is a terrible situation, and we need to help. This is a first step in helping, even though, as the Senator from New York so clearly opined, this is not the best solution. It is a solution.

I again want the RECORD to be spread with the fact that I appreciate the work of the Senators from Louisiana, especially my friend, Ms. LANDRIEU.

Mr. LEVIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to explain an amendment which I am going to ask the majority leader to accept as part of this unanimous consent request, and that I be allowed to proceed for 4 minutes to explain what this amendment does.

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, we have all gotten up on this floor and talked about the urgent necessity of helping the people of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. We have all been on this floor talking about the uniqueness of the disaster which is called Katrina. Every one of us goes back home. We received into our homes, our churches, our synagogues people who have been displaced by Katrina. Our people have responded magnificently to this disaster, to this catastrophe back home.

Now the question is whether we in the Congress are going to be helpful to the victims in a way which we have been helpful in so many other disasters of a smaller magnitude by providing a loan so that operations can continue, or whether we are going to incorporate a provision in this loan which has never been incorporated before in any loan ever made to a community that obtained a loan under this law.

We have never imposed this restriction that is in this bill on any community in this country. We have lent money to Ricksburg, ID; we have lent money to Johnstown, PA; we have lent

money to Clifton, AZ; we have lent money to Albion Borough, PA; we have lent money to Vassar, MI, in my home State.

There are occasions when those loans have been forgiven, and in the ones I just listed—and I want the majority leader to understand the depth of the feeling on this issue because it can happen to any of us—the loans I just listed, including one to my home State, have been forgiven when they met the conditions of the Stafford Act for forgiving loans.

But now we are telling the victims of the worst disaster we have had in this country that the Stafford Act provisions, which, under certain circumstances, could permit the forgiveness of a loan, will not be available to them. My amendment does not turn this loan into a grant.

If my amendment is accepted, it would provide that the same terms and conditions under which this loan is made will be the terms and conditions that have been applied to other loans.

To discriminate against these people who have been so victimized, to me, is unthinkable—that we would single them out for discriminatory language. I don't believe we can operate this way, and I don't believe the House would reject our language if my amendment is accepted.

The Senator from Delaware and I went over to the House last night. We talked with the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and he indicated that the language which I am going to suggest would be acceptable to him. He didn't speak for the whole House, obviously, and if the Senator from Delaware chooses to comment on this, I think he will restate what I just stated as being accurate.

My request, my plea, is that we adopt language which strikes the discriminatory provision which allows the Stafford Act forgiveness to be considered with these loans the way it has been considered with all other loans. That is my plea. And my plea is incorporated in an amendment.

My amendment, which I ask the majority leader to consider, would strike the word "not" in the bill where it says:

... that loans may not be canceled.

Strike the word "not" and substitute the words "may be canceled pursuant to the Stafford Act," and with an additional requirement, "with the approval of the Congress."

I suggest we add an additional safeguard, the safeguard of the Stafford Act, which has been applied to all other loans, but in addition to that, add a requirement that if there is forgiveness, it could only happen with the approval of the Congress. That is a double safeguard. That still would single them out as no others have been singled out, but at least it would keep the possibility explicit in the bill that under the circumstances that are provided for every other loan, that these loans might be forgiven should Congress so choose.

I have been told we can always do that; we always have that power, and we do. It is implicit. But I think we should make it explicit to give people the assurance that in addition—it is bad enough to be victims of this hurricane; it is doubly bad to be victims of discriminatory language. And we are not going to walk down that road. We are going to hold our hand out to you and not insult or offend at the same time.

I ask the leader whether he would amend his unanimous consent proposal to strike the word "not" on page 2, line 10, and substitute the words "only with the approval of the Congress"?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the majority leader so modify his request?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I object to the request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the majority leader's original consent request?

Mr. CARPER. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Regular order being called for, the Senator from Delaware must object or not object.

Mr. LEVIN. Parliamentary inquiry.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Does the Senator from Delaware or any other Senator not have the right to reserve the right to object?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is not a right to reserve the right to object; it is an indulgence of the Chair.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request by the majority leader?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1858) was read three times and passed, as follows:

S. 1858

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Community Disaster Loan Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. DISASTER LOANS.

(a) ESSENTIAL SERVICES.—Of the amounts provided in Public Law 109-62 for "Disaster Relief", up to \$750,000,000 may be transferred to the Disaster Assistance Direct Loan Program for the cost of direct loans as authorized under section 417 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5184) to be used to assist local governments in providing essential services: *Provided*, That such transfer may be made to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed \$1,000,000,000 under section 417 of the Stafford Act: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding section 417(b) of the Stafford Act, the amount of any such loan issued pursuant to this section may exceed \$5,000,000: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding section 417(c)(1) of the Stafford Act, such loans may not be canceled: *Provided further*, That the cost of modifying such loans shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 661a).

(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Of the amounts provided in Public Law 109-62 for “Disaster Relief”, up to \$1,000,000 may be transferred to the Disaster Assistance Direct Loan Program for administrative expenses to carry out the direct loan program, as authorized by section 417 of the Stafford Act.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, for the last 24 hours, we have dealt with an issue that centers around the Vitter bill and the proposal to appropriately be able to modify, increase the amounts of loans and loan programs. We have struggled to come to the point we have today, which maximizes our likelihood, having just passed the Vitter bill, to get language to the House of Representatives before they leave today so that we can respond to the very real needs of the local communities in New Orleans.

We have been working actually for about 10 days on the specific issue of being able to support local government, law enforcement, and hospitals. The step we just took in passing the Vitter bill maximizes our chance today of getting a bill to the House, which we will do, of having the House address it in the next few hours, and having this relief being made available to the people of New Orleans.

There have been a lot of suggestions in terms of language and changes in words, all of which is fine, and some of the language is even very reasonable in terms of the language itself, but after discussions with Republican leadership, the administration having fully vetted the language that is in the Vitter bill, I strongly believe that this gives us the best chance to respond to the very real needs of the people of New Orleans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, the last 24 hours has been a frustrating and disappointing time for me, quite frankly—frustrating because as we face an unprecedented crisis along the gulf coast, some elements of the Senate have acted as they often do by giving speeches and filibustering.

When I ran for the Senate last year, that is what I heard the most from real people in real life in real towns and cities across Louisiana. They did not get that disconnect. There were real issues on the ground they had dealt with every day in their lives, and yet so often the response of some in the Senate was to give speeches, to obstruct, and to filibuster. So I have to say particularly in these circumstances, when my State and the gulf coast face unprecedented obstacles and hurdles, it has been frustrating to get that response from the other side in the Senate. But we have moved through that, and I am glad.

Just a few minutes ago, we sent over to the House a significant measure to try to get some immediate relief to local governmental entities so that

they can sustain essential services, police and fire and hospitals and the like. That is vitally important.

When others have been filibustering, making speeches, and delaying, particularly in the last 24 hours, I tried to do something constructive. What I did is what I have done for the last 10 days—working on this vital issue, trying to get something meaningful, important, and positive done. When others gave speeches about what the perfect language would be, I actually talked to other folks who were clearly going to be involved in the process at the White House, at OMB, and in the House of Representatives to understand what the best language would be that we could hopefully pass this week. I continued that work last night, again as others were giving speeches and holding up action. I continued that work talking to dozens of people to try to get something important and significant done. Across the board, that included Members here, members of the administration, and Members of the House.

Senator LEVIN, the distinguished Senator from Michigan, mentioned one conversation with the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. I followed up with the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. I talked to him after that conversation, and it was crystal clear to me from my conversation with him that significant elements of the House of Representatives needed to see that at least at the front end, this was a loan program. We can talk later about what we will do at the back end, how things proceed, what the financial picture looks like in the future, but at least in the front end, it is very clear that they want to frame it as a loan program. That is the only reason I accepted that language, because I actually want to do something. I actually want to get needed help today, not in 2 weeks when it will be too late for so many of those communities and local jurisdictions of government that need to preserve their police, fire, and hospital services. That is the only reason I have focused on this particular version of the bill and that particular language.

Several speakers on the other side called it discriminatory. Let me explain a few other ways in which it is discriminatory because it is discriminatory in at least three other ways, and I am pretty darn proud of being able to negotiate those three other discriminatory provisions. No. 1, for the first time ever that I am aware of, ever in history, we are moving emergency Stafford Act funds that have already been appropriated by the Congress into this community disaster loan program under homeland security so it can be used for ongoing expenses, ongoing salaries, and other expenses of local government. That has never happened before. That is discriminatory, and I am proud of that discriminatory provision.

Secondly, we are lifting the cap on this program that ordinarily limits

these funds to \$5 million per entity of local government. We are blowing well past that, and there are significant numbers of local government entities, such as the city of New Orleans, that will be able to get loans way in excess of that, perhaps 10, 11, 12 times in excess of that in the case of the city of New Orleans. That is discriminatory because it has never happened before. It is discriminatory in our favor because we needed it.

So there are many provisions in this version of the bill that were discriminatory in our favor because these are unusual circumstances and call for absolutely dramatic action. So I am proud of being able to negotiate those. I accept this other provision because, again, what is important to real people in the real world in the real devastated area is that we get real help to them today—not give a speech, not filibuster, but get real help to them today and not simply pass it off for 2 weeks or a month. I am hopeful that is what this bill which we have just passed through the Senate will do.

It has not yet cleared the House, and immediately from this floor, I will go to the House and continue my discussions which were begun over a week ago with House leaders, House Members, to try to ensure that this type of strong, effective action actually happens today.

I thank the Chair for his indulgence. It certainly was not my plan or my actions which caused this 24 hours of obstruction, filibuster, and frustration. I share that frustration, and I thank everyone who has worked constructively on trying to get something done, everyone here, everyone in the U.S. House, everyone in the administration, and OMB, whose help put that together.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today first to pay tribute to the senior Senator from Louisiana for her courage, her strength, and her resolve. I have been so amazed and impressed at the way she has been willing to continue to be on this floor, regardless of how tired she became, in order to fight for the people of Louisiana. I hope everyone in Louisiana understands what she is doing on their behalf and on behalf of all of those in the entire gulf region.

What is so disappointing for me is to see that this has not been a bipartisan effort. It seemed reasonable to me. I represent Michigan, and fortunately we have not been in a situation like my colleagues from New York or the gulf or California. So far—knock on wood—we have not had to face that kind of a catastrophe. But I found what the Senator from Louisiana was asking for very reasonable.

On a bipartisan basis, we have appropriated \$61 billion to be used through FEMA. We assumed it would be already being used for the things the Senator

talked about. I was shocked to learn that those funds had not been released to help local communities, as we have been told, and that the process was not moving as it should when people are so desperately in need of support, whether it be the small businesses, the families, the seniors, the cities.

When the Senator from Louisiana asked us for a very modest request of allowing \$1 billion of \$61 billion to be used directly and immediately to help those who have been so devastated, we do not have bipartisan support for that. I was very disappointed that both Senators from Louisiana were not standing together for that, very surprised that instead what we see is an alternative that comes back that is not only less than what is needed but has restrictions that have not been put on other States and other communities. The caps being talked about being raised in terms of loans have been done before, but it is my understanding that no community has been asked before to guarantee a repayment on those loans. I do not know why anyone would support that kind of an effort for their State or their communities to be treated differently than other States or other communities.

If I were in that position, I would not want to say to my folks: I trust you less than I trust the folks in New York; I voted for a different set of rules for what happened in New York, what happened in relation to Washington, DC, and the Pentagon. I certainly would not want to be in a situation of saying that I would vote for rules that were penalizing my own people or saying we do not trust you as much as we trust people in other places. So I am surprised and disappointed, and I know the senior Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU, is as concerned, surprised, and deeply disappointed, certainly, as I am and more than I am because she is working on this every single day.

I just want to indicate that we could have done better, and I believe working together America can do better. I believe we can do better for the people of Louisiana and the gulf coast than what has been offered and passed here today. I know the senior Senator from Louisiana has worked very hard in order to put forward proposals that are better and that would do better than what has been achieved today.

I commend her once again and thank her on behalf of all of us who at any moment could find ourselves in the same situation, could find ourselves fighting for our people because of a devastating attack or natural disaster. I hope I would have the courage of conviction, the compassion, and the strength that the Senator from Louisiana has shown and I know will continue to show.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, folks who might be watching this debate across the country may be wondering

what this is all about. Let me try to simplify it as best I can.

Over the last month or so, the Congress has appropriated some \$61 billion to be used to assist in the reconstruction, the aid, and the housing of a lot of people whose lives have been disrupted and in some cases destroyed. There are a number of cities, towns, and jurisdictions within that region where their revenue base—the ability to raise taxes and to provide essential services—is gone. Of that \$61 billion, FEMA is not authorized to extend or lend that money to those cities or towns or jurisdictions without our authorization.

The legislation that is before us today would authorize the movement of about \$750 million from FEMA to be able to lend that money to some of these cities, towns, parishes, and jurisdictions so that hospitals can be helped and police, fire services, and other services can be extended even though the revenue base has dried up under all of this water.

Historically, when FEMA has been given the authority to extend this money, to lend money to other communities, other cities, other States, the loans have in some cases been forgiven. It did not require an act of Congress to do that. It did not require any particular action by OMB or certification by OMB to do that. It occurred under the law. The loans were forgiven.

Senator LEVIN mentioned earlier that a number of jurisdictions, a number of local government borrowers borrowed money extended through FEMA to help these communities in their most tough times, in Idaho, in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Arizona, and others. They did not have to come and ask for an act of Congress to get that forgiveness. They didn't have to go to OMB and say please forgive this loan. The loans were forgiven.

Senator CLINTON spoke a bit earlier as well and talked about the generous assistance that the taxpayers of this country provided to New York City on the heels of 9/11. Mr. President, \$20 billion was the amount of money, almost a direct infusion. I thought it was loan. For all these years I thought it was a loan that was forgiven. I was wrong. It was a grant—just a gift to the people of New York as they struggled to recover from their tragedy.

The tragedy that has fallen on the folks along the gulf coast is every bit as bad for a lot of them as what happened in New York on 9/11. Yet we are not prepared to provide a grant to those communities, those cities, so they can provide essential services. Frankly, none of us are calling for doing that.

FEMA has all this money we provided them. Absent some legislation today, they are not able to extend any of that money to help these communities and cities. The legislation is designed to say we are going to allow FEMA to extend those loans.

But unlike the way we treated New York, which got a grant, not a loan,

and unlike the loans that were extended to all the communities listed on this sheet of paper whose loans were forgiven and did not even require our action or OMB's forgiveness, we say with respect to the folks on the gulf coast: We are not going to forgive your loan.

CARL LEVIN—Senator LEVIN—and I spent a good deal of time last night trying to put together a compromise. I appreciate very much the cooperation of Senator LANDRIEU to help find that compromise and Senator VITTER and certainly Senator FRIST. Senator LEVIN and I, at the midnight hour last night, were down in the House and found Congressman LEWIS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and said to him: What if we provide a change in language in this bill so, in order to forgive a loan that FEMA would make under the authorization of this bill, it would require an act of Congress? The Senate and House and President would have to concur in that forgiveness.

He said he thought that was a reasonable idea and thought even the House might go along with that.

I am disappointed to hear this morning that is not going to happen. Senator FRIST, last night in conversation after midnight with Senator LEVIN and me, said he thought that was a reasonable idea. He couldn't commit himself to make it happen, but he thought that was a reasonable approach, and, frankly, I do, too. For the life of me, I do not see why that is not acceptable.

If we were to include language—and we are not going to get the chance to do this because Senator LEVIN's amendment is not going to be made in order, but if we were to include language that said an act of Congress was required in order to forgive loans made by FEMA to these jurisdictions in their hour of need, that is a very high standard. It is a standard we never set for these communities. It is a standard we never set for New York.

The greatest irony to me is, going back, we didn't require an act of Congress or intervention of OMB to enable the forgiveness of these loans. Going forward, as I read the legislation—going forward, if you are from Delaware or from Michigan or if you are from Georgia and your communities seek a loan from FEMA in a similar situation, an emergency, moneys that have been authorized and appropriated, you don't have to get an act of Congress to have that loan forgiven. You don't have to get any special approval from OMB so the loan can be forgiven. It can be forgiven.

Yet in this case, with respect to the Gulf Coast States, we do not allow that to happen. Going back in time and going forward in time it looks to me as if we protect the rest of us. We allow for the loans to be forgiven for the other 49 States or 48 States. But not in this case. That does not make sense. That does not make sense.

As we move to pass the legislation, I echo what some of my other colleagues

have said. We can do better. When we have an opportunity to return, in a week or so, my earnest hope is that we will do better.

In closing, I say to my friend and colleague, Senator LANDRIEU, it has been an honor to stand by her side in this struggle. The people of Louisiana are fortunate to have Senators with that kind of passion and care for them. I hope, as we go forward working with Senator VITTER, we can get to an outcome that is fair to the people you represent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I thank, so much, the Senator from Delaware who, before he was a Senator—because he wasn't born one either—was a Governor of Delaware. Before he was Governor, he was a husband and a father, which he still is. I know he does a magnificent job at family and in the Senate because I have seen him here at late hours.

Last night this Senator from Delaware, who does not, obviously, have a dog in this hunt, stood through the night and negotiated with myself and with my colleague from Louisiana, with Senator FRIST, with Senator REID, and we negotiated and offered one compromise after another in meetings, on the telephone, on the floor, when we could speak—because speech was limited last night. Despite the notion that is out there that Senators can speak any time they want, the rules of the Senate actually prevent Senators from speaking. So I was not able to speak as much as I would have liked through the night last night. When I was not able to speak on the floor, we were in meetings, in phone calls, speaking with the White House and the House leadership and Republican colleagues and Democratic colleagues, trying to work through this situation.

We put our best efforts forward. We are now down to this time, which is basically the end of this debate, having passed a bill by Senator VITTER and Senator FRIST that will basically allow us to have the loans we seek, loans that are so necessary, but a bill that forces us to take it in a discriminatory fashion.

I believe this Senator has shown, on many occasions, a willingness to compromise and to work through difficult situations. I helped negotiate No Child Left Behind on this floor, one of the premier centerpieces of the current President's administration, of his agenda, even when half of my caucus was opposed—not sort of opposed but very opposed. But I knew what was best for Louisiana was to move forward because we had already gone down the road of accountability. It was showing some results. The children in my State were learning. The gap between the rich and the poor was closing, not because the rich were coming down but because the poor were coming up.

White children and Black children, who had been by law separated for over

150 years in schools, were then thrust together in the 1960s and 1970s. I believed that law, and I still believe this law, could help lift those who had limited opportunities. I have worked with Senators on both sides of the aisle, for the 8 years that I have been here, to try to craft and negotiate some of the toughest legislation the Senate has seen—compromise on missile defense, compromise on Corps of Engineers to move a WRDA bill. I worked for 10 years to compromise the Conservation and Reinvestment Act where 4,500 organizations in this country, from the most liberal to the most conservative, came together one time on one bill to provide coastal money for all the communities in the Nation: 10 years of meetings, 10 years of phone calls, 10 years of speeches, 10 years of pleas, 10 years of press conferences, 10 years of alliance building, only to get down to the last minute some years ago to be told, with 72 signatures on that bill at the last minute, 5 years ago: Senator, we cannot bring your bill up, there is an election around the corner and it may have repercussions for one or two people here. We can't do it.

You could have taken a knife and stabbed it in my heart, but I stood there and took it, not because it was me but because the people I represent I knew were getting a bad deal. But in my heart I knew that I and our delegation had literally done everything we could possibly do. When it came to the end, the death was quick.

When I got back in the next session, after my State had been stabbed in the heart and left for dead—which we have died, through this hurricane—I started putting yet another bill together because there is nothing wrong with me that I don't know how to work through difficult situations. My family has been doing it a very long time.

I thank Senator CLINTON for her remarks. She obviously understands what the people of New York went through. I also thank Senator SCHUMER. Although he was not here in person, he was here in spirit. He and Senator CLINTON stood by the Republican mayor at the time, Rudy Giuliani, lifted him up and helped him. No second-guessing; they helped him and they lifted the city up.

I thank Senator JEFFORDS, who has been a champion. He stood at the Leeville Bridge with me. I have been on so many trips down to Louisiana I lose count, but one of them I remember very well. Senator JEFFORDS came down with me, so far to the bottom of Louisiana if he had taken one more step he would have been in the Gulf of Mexico. There is not much down there—no big cities, no big money, no big press conferences. There is hardly a camera at the end of LA-1, at Port Fourchon, but Senator JEFFORDS went. He stood there, and while I was explaining to him the difficulty of getting people out in an evacuation for a hurricane on a highway that goes underwater when there is rain, let alone

when a category 5 hurricane comes bearing down on you—he stood there on the bridge with me and at the moment—if I could have scripted it myself I could not have done it any better, and people who were not there are not going to believe what I am going to say but I have a lot of witnesses—at the very moment I was pointing to the Leeville Bridge, a shrimp trawler came in, lifted their nets up as they do—they look like butterflies out on the gulf—they lifted their nets up and ran into the bridge, with Senator JEFFORDS on it, and shook the bridge and shut it down like that.

The words had just come out of my mouth: Senator JEFFORDS, not only is the road a problem but when the hurricane comes, if this bridge shuts down, there is no way out. And the shrimp trawler hit the bridge.

He said to me, laughing with his good sense of humor: Senator, don't you think you went a little too far to make your point?

And we had a big laugh about it, not that I laughed about the shrimp trawler, but we literally cannot believe that and have talked about it for 3 years.

Our strength is found at home in our neighborhoods, in our churches, on corners, in our workplaces, and in our places of worship. Right here is where our strength is found—not in anyplace overseas, right here at home.

I am going to wrap up by showing you pictures of the homes to make my point. This is our home on the gulf coast. After the photographer took this picture, the commentary in the National Geographic magazine was something like: It looks like a weapon of mass destruction went off on the gulf coast. This is exactly what would happen if a weapon of mass destruction would go off, except you wouldn't have the trees and maybe the beach would be a little disheveled. That is what it looks like. It was a storm of massive destruction.

Our strength begins at home.

The underlying bill is sending \$415 billion overseas. We ask for a loan program of \$1 billion already allocated under the same terms and conditions that everyone in America has received. And we are told no. It was too much to do.

I am going to close with this.

This is a picture of New Orleans. It doesn't look like this today because all the water has gone down. But when people say, Why can't you be a little bit more self-reliant, I am not sure any city in America could stand itself up by itself with no loans, no grants, with the police force being laid off, a fire department being laid off, city workers being laid off, an electric company taking bankruptcy, no water in the pipes. And when we come to ask for a loan, we are told: Sorry, there is no money in the Treasury. We have made other arrangements for the taxes that you have paid over the last 300 years.

Let me submit for the RECORD a letter from the U.S. Conference of Mayors

which they sent to this Senate. They said:

We greatly appreciate Congress' attention to America's cities devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and now Hurricane Rita, and to those cities home to hundreds of thousands of evacuees. The leadership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, convened in Long Beach on September 22-24, resolved that Congress must pass legislation to provide direct fiscal assistance to cities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—

All cities, cities that are Republican cities and cities that are Democratic cities, communities that do not vote for Democrats and communities that do not vote for Republicans—all cities.

Most importantly, we urge the Senate to reject language that would for the first time in history remove the possibility that communities' disaster loans be forgivable, if needed, due to the dire situation many of the impacted cities will continue to face in the months and years ahead.

It goes on to say they are going to keep a vigil. I hope somebody keeps the candle burning.

I ask unanimous that the letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS,
Washington, DC, October 7, 2005.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Democratic Leader, U.S. Senate.

DEAR SENATE LEADERS:

FISCAL AID NEEDED NOW FOR HURRICANE
CITIES, WITHOUT NEW STRINGS ATTACHED

We greatly appreciate Congress's attention to America's cities devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and now Hurricane Rita, and to those cities home to hundred of thousands of evacuees. The Leadership of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, convened in Long Beach on September 22-24, resolved that Congress must pass legislation to provide direct fiscal assistance to cities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as we stated to you in our letter of September 29.

Most importantly, we urge the Senate to reject language that would—for the first time in history—remove the possibility that community disaster loans be forgivable, if needed, due to the dire situation many of the impacted cities will continue to face in the months and years ahead.

As we learned during our recent fact-finding mission to Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, the mayors of these cities have lost most of their tax base and will soon be without the funds needed to pay first responders, public works employees, and other key local personnel that are leading the recovery effort. These local personnel are truly national assets in the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and these cities must not be allowed to go bankrupt. Without a functioning local government, the private sector will be stymied in efforts to invest in the reconstruction effort, and it will be impossible for volunteer relief efforts to be coordinated and to function.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact our Chief of Staff Ed Somers at (202) 861-6706 or esomers@usmayors.org.

We look forward to working with you in the coming days, as together we strengthen the intergovernmental partnership needed to

make sure our cities are safe and our nation prospers.

Sincerely,

BEVERLY O'NEILL,
Mayor of Long Beach, President.
TOM COCHRAN,
Executive Director.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I have shown all the pictures I can show for the week. I have done all the talking I can do for today. But I can promise you this. This talking will continue and these meetings will continue and this debate will continue. It is not going away.

The leadership of the House of Representatives needs to be put on notice that this debate is going to go on for a very long time, until we get relief, recovery, respect, and the dignity that we deserve as American citizens from Louisiana to Texas to Alabama to Mississippi and the people whom we represent, Black and White, rich and poor, young and old, small and large businesses alike, and our faith-based community, get the respect it deserves from the floor of this Senate and the Congress of the United States, and gets the help it needs to get through and rebuild.

I assure you that we will rebuild this coast. We will rebuild the gulf coast. It was paid for by a great President, President Jefferson, at 3 cents an acre in 1803 where he borrowed money. He knew what he was borrowing money for. He had a good reason to borrow it, and he bought the Louisiana Purchase. Andrew Jackson came and defended it. His statue never went underwater.

We will rebuild this region all through the gulf coast and into Louisiana—the ports, the energy infrastructure, turn our lights on again, and keep the lights on all over America, to try to keep people's bills as low as we can and keep their heat on this winter, which is approaching. Even if you do not give us one penny, even if you do not lend us money, we have been self-reliant for over 300 or more years. The people here are pretty tough and it takes a lot more than this to beat our spirit.

The bill is gone. It is the best we could do. It is not the best we could have done, but it is what we have. We will live with it, but we will not stop this debate.

I yield the floor.

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

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

NATURAL GAS CRISIS

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, this week, Senator BINGAMAN, Senator AKAKA and I returned from Baton Rouge.

We went down to see and learn firsthand about Hurricanes Katrina and Rita damage to the energy infrastructure. There is a great deal of work to be done, and there is a great deal of courage and confidence that it can be done. We need to find ways to make that recovery go right.

Yesterday, my committee held a hearing where we heard from energy industry witnesses who have been impacted by the hurricanes. The main message of that hearing was we are in troubled energy times, particularly on the natural gas front. The CEO of DOW Chemical Company painted a very bleak picture for American industry.

Our industries that rely on natural gas both as a fuel and a feedstock have hard choices before them about how and where they will base their operations. In the U.S., natural gas prices are close to \$14. In China, it is less than \$5. In Saudi Arabia, it is about \$1. If we translated gasoline prices to the level of increases faced by natural gas—we would be seeing \$7-a-gallon gasoline at the pump right now.

At DOW's St. Charles petrochemical complex that I saw in Baton Rouge, I learned that every \$1 increase in the cost of natural gas means an additional \$35 million a year in fuel costs for that single facility. Our manufacturers have to compete in global markets. At those prices, they can't.

The energy bill we just passed took some good steps forward to address these challenges but did not secure more natural gas supply that we have available right here at home.

In the area on the Outer Continental Shelf known as the nonleased portions of Lease Sale 181 which is not under moratorium, but which we are not allowing leasing, there is approximately 7.2 trillion cubic feet of gas. In the areas more than 100 miles from any state coastline, 2 resources are estimated to be approximately 6 trillion cubic feet of gas.

This area can be leased administratively, without any legislative action. At our committee hearing and during yesterday's press conference I urged the administration to reconsider this policy in light of our Nation's natural gas crisis, which has seen a 121-percent price increase in just 1 year.

I will continue to work to cure more domestic energy supplies, but in the short term all the witnesses the committee heard from yesterday said conservation is the most effective tool we can use to deal with the present crisis.

If every American turns down their thermostat just 2 degrees this winter, it could free up 3 billion cubic feet of gas per day.

According to the DOW witness yesterday, that kind of conservation would be equal to having 3 LNG terminals. In addition, we need to focus our efforts on organizing the recovery on the energy infrastructure, our witnesses all stressed the need to give priority to restoration of natural gas processing plants.