

in dealing with this tragedy. And we remind ourselves of that, and we take a lesson from them. When we come back up here Monday through Friday, then hopefully we would conduct ourselves as well as they are conducting themselves. They would expect that from us, and we will do a lot better job of helping deal with this immense tragedy, 20 times as large as anything we have seen before.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to say a word about something important that happened this afternoon that is good news for the men and women in this country who go to college.

We have the best system of colleges and universities in the world. I can remember Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON from Texas and Senator FRIST arranged for a group of us to meet with the former President of Brazil, Mr. Cardoso, who had been at the Library of Congress for a while and was going back to Brazil. Senator HUTCHISON said: Mr. Cardoso, what will you take back to your country about your stay in the United States? He did not hesitate for a moment. He said: Senator HUTCHISON, the excellence of the American University. He said: There is nothing in the world like it. It is one of the greatest strengths of your country.

There are many reasons for this. I believe it is because we have created an environment in which we can bring out the best. We have 6,000 autonomous for-profit, nonprofit, State-supported, not-State-supported institutions, and we have generous Federal funding that follows students to the college or university of their choice. That market environment has permitted us to surpass the world. We do not just have some of the best colleges and universities in the world, we have most of them, and several of those are in the home State of the Presiding Officer, in Virginia, and some of those are in my State as well.

Today the committee upon which the Presiding Officer and I serve, the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, reported out legislation that has to do with Federal support for colleges and universities for the next 4 or 5 years. The importance of that is this: 60 percent of the students in our country attending universities, community colleges, technical institutes, or for-profit institutions do so with the support of Federal grants or Federal loans. Sixty percent of the college students are affected by this legislation.

While the details of this legislation will come out over the next few weeks, it is important to say two things about it. One is the remarkably effective job by the Senator from Wyoming and the Senator from Massachusetts, Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY. This is a complex bill. There are lots of opinions

on it. There are more than 20 of us on the committee. At a time of great difficulty around here, they produced legislation that we unanimously supported and agreed upon and will bring to the Senate floor. It is almost certain it will go to conference with the House of Representatives and result in a final bill that we will then send to the President. It was a first-class job of leadership by Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY, and I salute them for it, and I am glad to have been part of their committee.

The second thing to say is the bill is good for students. For students, it increases the amount of Pell Grants from \$4,050 to \$4,500 over 5 years. The bill gives students who want to use their Pell Grant during the summer the opportunity to do so for the first time, making Pell Grants available year round.

We have a lot of working people who go to colleges and universities today. They may want to go four straight semesters. Right now they cannot do that if they are eligible for Federal support. Now they can under this bill when it passes. In addition, Pell Grants will be larger for students who are majoring in math, sciences, or critical foreign languages, thereby encouraging students to pursue these fields.

Someone told me in Tennessee last week that we only had one new physics teacher who graduated and came into our classes. They are going somewhere else. We need more homegrown scientists in the United States, and this is one step to help with that.

The bill is also good for universities as well as students because it begins to relieve the oppressive paperwork burden the Federal Government places on colleges and universities, freeing up scarce dollars to spend on improving quality teaching, research, and public service rather than paperwork.

For example, this legislation creates an expert panel to review, evaluate, and streamline the 7,000 Federal regulations that govern grants and loans to college students. I made a speech on the floor of the Senate a few months ago, and I stacked up in several boxes the 7,000 regulations that every single one of the 6,000 colleges and universities has to go through before they can admit students with a Federal grant or a Federal loan. That is ridiculous. The President of Stanford said they were spending 7 percent of their tuition on complying with Federal grants and Federal loans. Universities should be able to focus more on teaching and research, and less on complying with reporting requirements.

In addition, for the first time, the Federal Government will be required to develop a compliance calendar, making it easier for our 6,000 colleges and universities to comply with Federal rules and helping them with institutional planning and avoiding inadvertent errors in meeting these requirements. In other words, we are saying to the U.S. Department of Education, if you are

going to have 7,000 regulations—and we in Congress are guilty of causing that to happen, let me admit that—at least somebody in the Department of Education is going to have to put on a single calendar all of the deadlines when someone at George Mason University or Vanderbilt University or some small college in Iowa has to comply with each particular regulation. That will make it easier for the colleges, and it might discourage the number of new regulations.

Finally, universities doing a good job of keeping down the rate of loan defaults will be given more flexibility in how they use Federal dollars in grants and loans to students.

I am especially delighted the bill includes Teach for America legislation that I introduced with the Democratic leader, HARRY REID. Expanding Teach for America will not only build a corps of young college graduates who spend 2 years teaching in schools in lower income areas, but a corps of expanding influential alumni who support quality public education. I actually believe that corps of expanding influential alumni of these tremendously talented young people who graduate from the finest colleges and universities and go into the inner city and teach for 2 years will produce for us a corps of thousands of Americans who know what they are talking about when the issue of quality public education comes up. We have the best colleges and universities in the world, but they need to continue to be the best in order to maintain our standard of living.

The Federal Government is doing its part. Over the last 5 years, Federal spending on higher education has increased 71.8 percent. At the same time, State funding for higher education has increased on average by only 6.8 percent, partly because of the big increase in Medicaid costs to States, which have increased over the same time by 35.6 percent. This lower amount of State funding has meant that college tuition at public 4-year institutions has increased 38.2 nationally.

In Tennessee, the situation is equally pronounced. As I stated, Federal spending on higher education has increased 71.8 percent over the past 5 years. In Tennessee, spending on higher education has increased about 10 percent while Medicaid spending has increased by 71 percent. That is why during the same period the tuition at the University of Tennessee has increased by 33.4 percent.

I raise this because I hope in our discussion of the higher education bill that we will come to an understanding that one of the principal reasons for the big increases in tuition is the out-of-control State spending for Medicaid. Governors—and the Presiding Officer and I were both Governors—constantly have to fight to keep Medicaid spending under control so we will have enough money left for quality education. And if we do not have quality colleges and universities over the next

10 years, we will not be able to keep our standard of living as we compete with Japan, China, Germany, India, and Great Britain—all who recognize the superiority of American higher education, and are taking significant steps to keep their brightest students home and to improve their institutions.

I am delighted to be able to salute Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY. I know they each will have longer statements to make about the bill and all of its parts. But it is a good piece of legislation for students, it is a good piece of legislation for colleges and universities, and it is an excellent piece of legislation for our country.

I yield the floor.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today—heart-sick—to speak about the absolute devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. This tragedy represents the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history.

This hurricane spared nothing. Estimates of damage now run as high as \$200 billion. The cost, in human lives and suffering, is just staggering.

Tragically, it will take weeks and weeks to ascertain the true loss of life. As the recovery proceeds, I pledge to do all in my power to help those in need to rebuild cities, communities, and shattered lives and families across the Gulf Coast.

My home State of California knows well the destruction possible from natural disasters. So many times the people of California have been saved by the generosity of the American people.

I have no doubt that the people of my State will now rally to the aid of those in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Many already have.

In addition to monetary contributions from residents throughout the State, over 1,500 California first responders are on the scene, as well as over 700 California National Guard personnel, 116 California Highway Patrol officers, eight swiftwater rescue teams, eight urban search and rescue task forces, and six disaster medical assistance teams.

On Tuesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced that California had accepted a request from FEMA to provide housing and assistance for 1,000 storm victims left homeless by the hurricane. San Diego has made 600 beds available, San Francisco 300, and San Jose 100. And if FEMA asks for more, the State will be ready. Los Angeles has planned accommodations for 2,000 evacuees and Sacramento County is preparing for 300.

Campuses of the University of California and California State University systems, as well as private colleges and universities from across the State, have opened their doors to college students who were displaced or had their educational plans interrupted by the hurricane. Hundreds of students have

already taken advantage of these opportunities and will be starting classes this fall.

My heart goes out to all those suffering from this catastrophe. I have seen the destruction caused by massive mudslides, major earthquakes, and torrential rains. I have seen the fear and hopelessness that comes when families lose everything except the shirts on their backs. My thoughts and prayers are with those Americans in the pitch dark with no electricity, in shelters with their homes swept away, and with a future that seems without hope.

I commend all those who have worked literally around the clock in response to the disaster. The emergency responders—from the National Guard and Coast Guard to hospital workers to the local police and fire departments—have been nothing short of heroic. They are risking their lives and deserve our deep gratitude.

The American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and many other charitable organizations and religious groups have mobilized thousands of volunteer workers to bring aid and shelter to victims of the devastation.

The American people are already demonstrating their tremendous compassion and magnanimity—contributions exceed \$500 million, with surely much more to come. Nations from around the world have also offered to help. I thank them as well.

But despite the effort and concern of all these individuals, I am shocked at what has gone terribly wrong in preparation for Hurricane Katrina. What we saw in the days following the storm has been a massive failure of government on all levels to anticipate, prepare, and respond. Days before the storm FEMA knew it was coming. It was announced well in advance that Katrina had become a lethal category 5 storm as it made its way through the Gulf of Mexico.

To see the horrific images of the dead lying in the street unattended, bodies floating aimlessly facedown in the water, and Americans with no choice but to relieve themselves on the field of the Superdome—it boggles the mind that such depraved conditions descended on one of America's great cities.

It was a flat embarrassment to the country. Those who have lost loved ones deserved much better than these appalling conditions.

Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN have launched a Governmental Affairs Committee oversight investigation to ensure that the requisite support and resources go to those in need. They will also be examining the inadequate preparation and response to this disaster.

Senator CLINTON and others have called on President Bush to appoint an independent national commission to review Hurricane Katrina relief efforts modeled after the 9/11 Commission.

I completely support these efforts, and would like to go on record with a few of the serious concerns that I have

regarding what has taken place. These are all problems that we must grapple with if we are to truly protect our homeland from disasters of all kinds.

Two days before the storm, a mandatory evacuation order went out for the residents of New Orleans. But didn't Federal, State, and local authorities know that tens of thousands of city residents lacked the funds and means to depart and, more fundamentally, had nowhere to go?

As a result, the poor stayed put: stranded throughout the city and away from any safe and secure shelter. Clearly there is not an adequate mechanism for removing Americans out of harm's way in the face of a crisis.

Warning systems and evacuation plans, prepositioning of transportation assets and emergency communications facilities, are all in dire need of an overhaul.

As always in these situations, the first priority is to save lives. Once the storm had passed, emergency responders went to dramatic lengths to save those stranded in houses, in apartments, and on rooftops throughout the region. Through their tireless efforts, thousands have been saved.

But what should have been an immediate and massive delivery of food, water, and medical supplies to evacuees came much too late. Thousands of hurricane victims went for days without anything to eat or drink. Babies went without formula. Diabetics went without insulin. People took refuge on freeways only to bake in the heat without relief or water and nowhere to go.

I realize the unprecedented magnitude of this disaster. But the delay in response was simply inexcusable. It pains me to admit that people died because aid did not arrive fast enough to those in need.

Downtown, New Orleans' Charity Hospital went unevacuated for days with no food, clean water, or basic medical supplies. These represent the sickest and neediest of the storm victims, and all efforts should have been made for their immediate evacuation—by boat to reach the hospital or at least helicopter airlifts from the roof if possible. Vigilant doctors, nurses, and other hospital workers performed courageously but did not have the support they needed.

There seemed to be no plan in place for providing shelter once the storm was over. Ad hoc decisions appeared to cause widespread confusion as desperate evacuees did not know where to find basic needs. Rumors swirled of food here and fuel there, forcing victims to scavenge in search of the basic necessities of life.

As regional evacuation centers filled there was no effective plan for long or even short-term shelter and care of displaced residents. With nowhere for storm victims to go, evacuation centers turned to squalor. Serious reports of abuse and assault have come out of these shelters.

Other cities graciously volunteered to open facilities to evacuees. For that