

proceed to H.R. 3996, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (H.R. 3996) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is my understanding there is a motion to proceed that is now before the Senate. I ask to withdraw it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the motion is withdrawn.

Mr. REID. What now is the pending business?

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FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 3500, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Dorgan/Grassley) amendment No. 3508 (to amendment No. 3500), to strengthen payment limitations and direct the savings to increased funding for certain programs.

Reid amendment No. 3509 (to amendment No. 3508), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3510 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3500), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3511 (to amendment No. 3510), to change the enactment date.

Motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 3512.

Reid amendment No. 3512 (to the instructions of the motion to commit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3513 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3514 (to amendment No. 3513), to change the enactment date.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is my understanding there is a cloture motion on the Harkin substitute amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion having been filed pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Harkin substitute amendment No. 3500 to H.R. 2419, the farm bill.

Tom Harkin, Russell D. Feingold, Jon Tester, Dick Durbin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Frank R. Lautenberg, John F. Kerry, Ted Kennedy, Byron L. Dorgan, Barack Obama, Ben Nelson, Amy Klobuchar, Sherrod Brown, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tim Johnson, Jim Webb, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to calendar No. 487, H.R. 3996—I am happy to see my friend, the distinguished Senator from Georgia on the floor. I believe my friend from Georgia knows how hard I have tried to get some way to proceed forward on this farm bill. We don't have farms in Nevada. We do have some. We have lots of ranches. As I have said on the floor before, the one crop we are very proud of is onions. We are the largest white onion producer in the world—in the United States—I am sorry. And in Lyon County, we produce lots of stuff: onions, garlic, and in Mason Valley, lots and lots of alfalfa. The greenbelts of Nevada are shrinking because of the population growth we have. But we still have ranches—ranches that were owned by Bing Crosby—I mean that were famous ranches. They still are. But even they are being hit by the population growth.

We are very proud of our ranching community. There are things in this farm bill that have direct impact on my constituency in the State of Nevada. That is one reason I have tried everything I know to move to this bill.

We have tried moving forward amendment by amendment. The Dorgan amendment under the bill is still pending. That is a bipartisan amendment. I have suggested let's have X number of amendments, and finally I got so desperate I said let's have the Republicans have 10 amendments and we will have 5. Still no takers on that. We heard from Senator HARKIN today who said: Senator CHAMBLISS and I now have the amendments down to less than 40. I said: Oh, good. Let's enter into an agreement that we will have 40 amendments, or whatever it is, and we will proceed to work on those. No time agreements. No deal.

The only agreement we have had on this bill is we have locked in a finite number of amendments. But it is 287 amendments—287 amendments—with issues that are so pertinent to the farm bill, like immigrants' driver's licenses, just for beginners. There have been some suggestions: Well, why don't you just move to the bill. We are in the waning days of this year, and we have to proceed and complete a number of issues. But I was a little bit lax. I said: Well, maybe we are working here, trying to work together on things, and the Amtrak bill hasn't been done for 5 or 6 years and people are crying for something to be done about this. We have one Republican Senator for years who has tried to kill Amtrak. He came very close to it a few times and we always were able to survive. So this year, I said let's move to it. On a bipartisan basis we had people who wanted to do that bill. We opened it up. What is the first amendment? A tax measure. A tax measure. We finally got that bill passed. But we can't on this farm bill open it up.

I have heard the distinguished Republican leader come forward and say: Well, that is what we have done in the past. I have been through this before, but let me repeat for everyone: The average number of nongermane amendments on farm bills has been one—one per bill—one. In my efforts to be fair and to move forward, I said, OK, on the 10 amendments the Republicans want to do on this bill, we will have two of them nongermane. I didn't ask what they would be. There was no taking of that. So I have done literally everything I can do.

The farming and ranching community of this country, they know why we are not moving forward on the farm bill. They know what is going on: The Republicans do not want to move on the farm bill. Maybe they don't care about it. Maybe they think it would be some kind of a victory for Democrats who are in the majority in the Senate—not much of a majority, but we are in the majority. I don't understand what this is all about. But Friday morning we are going to have a cloture vote again. Is that so unreasonable that if people believe in the farm bill, then they would still have 30 hours to offer amendments relating to the farm bill? They would have to be germane amendments. But what would be wrong with that?

We have had one cloture motion. It has been defeated. We have waited weeks now. We have offered all kinds of suggestions to move forward. We have not heard a single proposal back from the Republicans other than to say: Well, open it up for amendments. Open it up for amendments so we can ask that we initiate a flat tax, or open it up to an amendment that we push forward on Bush's tax cuts that have put this country into such a terrible hole financially. That is what the plan is, and we are not going to be a part of that plan. We want to do a farm bill. We want to do it fairly and reasonably.

While we are talking about schedule, I have spoken to the Speaker several times today and she is going to complete either today or tomorrow an energy bill. That being the case, that will come here as a message from the House and we will have a cloture vote on that. The way things now are, if it gets here tomorrow, we will file a cloture motion on that and we will have a vote on that Saturday. So everyone should know that unless there is an agreement to change that, we will have a vote on Saturday. We have Senators leaving for Bali and Senators wanting to go to some celebration at Pearl Harbor, and a lot of other places people want to go. But the country has a lot of business that needs to be attempted to be completed, and we are going to do that. I hope we can work together to solve some of these issues.

But to show the futility of our trying to progress, take, for example, the AMT, this tax proposal which was passed by a former Republican administration. Unless we place a so-called

patch on it, 20 million people or so will have an added tax. Some who make as much as \$75,000 to \$500,000 will be affected by this legislation if we don't do something to patch it. I have done everything I can except turn a back flip off of the Presiding Officer's chair to see if we can figure out a way to move forward on AMT. I ask: How could we be more reasonable than what we have suggested?

The House has passed a bill. It is over here. I said: Let's vote on that by unanimous consent. Let's vote on it. In addition to voting on that, let's vote on Senator LOTT's proposal. Senator LOTT's proposal is to do away with the AMT. The only problem with that is it would cost about \$1 trillion, but we are willing to vote on it. Senator GRASSLEY and Senator BAUCUS have a measure out of the Finance Committee that says we are going to have tax incentives, which people believe in, and they are all paid for. With that is an AMT that is not paid for. Nope, we can't do that. I said: Well, I have a new idea. Let's have a vote and not pay for it. Nope, can't do that. So if there were ever a book on being reasonable, I hope they include a paragraph or two about what we have tried to do the last few days. We have tried to be reasonable.

Think about this: What else could we agree to do on AMT? They don't want to vote on it if it is paid for. They don't want a vote if it is half paid for, they don't want a vote if it is repealed, and they don't want a vote if it is not paid for. I don't know what other iterations of this anyone could come up with, but I think I have covered the basics. We have been told by the Republicans no vote on any of them.

If there is a closure of this congressional session and the AMT hasn't passed, it can be directed where most everything is directed—with the Republicans marching in lockstep with the White House. The Republicans. If there is no AMT patch, it is the fault of the Republicans. They won't let us vote on anything.

So I say through the Chair to the distinguished Senator and my friend from Georgia: Do you know how we can complete the farm bill?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, first, I thank the majority leader for coming down to the floor and providing one more chance to discuss this. I regret that the majority leader has taken this action to file cloture. But I can tell you what the answer is and I can tell you how to complete the farm bill. This is our fifth week on this bill, literally. We had 2 weeks before the Thanksgiving recess. We have been out 2 weeks, and our staff has been working extremely hard during those 2 weeks, and here we are back in the fifth week. If we had had an open process initially, this farm bill would be in conference today. I think that still can happen. The distinguished majority leader referred to the number of amendments that are out there. I don't remember what the number was, but 286, I be-

lieve, is what he said, and I think that is correct. A little over half of those were Democratic amendments and about half were Republican amendments. We have hotlined our bill once again today, and through work of the staff on both sides, we have cut our number in half again today, and I dare say I can cut it by two-thirds in very short order. So we are moving south. We are moving in the direction of getting amendments not only that are germane, but as the distinguished majority leader said, we have always had a couple of nongermane amendments on farm bills. As I looked at the list of the Democratic amendments, there were a number—I daresay more nongermane amendments on there than there were amendments that are germane to the farm bill. So I don't think it serves any purpose for us to argue about the germaneness or nongermaneness, obviously, with the exception of the cloture vote, what effect it will have on that.

But here is my point. This has been a bipartisan effort, as the majority leader knows. I worked very closely with Senator HARKIN and Senator CONRAD and we have developed not only a bipartisan farm bill, but we, in a bipartisan way, have been whittling down the amendments. We are going to continue to do that, in spite of the cloture motion being filed, and I am very hopeful that whether it is Friday of this week or Monday of next week or Tuesday of next week, whatever the date may be, we can come back to the majority leader as well as the minority leader and say: OK, here is where we are. This is the final number of amendments that we can finally have votes on, and if no agreement can be negotiated on that basis, then perhaps we can't come to some conclusion of it. But we have stood ready from day 1 to have an open process of amendments being filed, amendments being debated, and votes on those amendments, and some of those amendments I have significant disagreements with. But I was willing to debate those amendments and if we win, we win; if we don't win, we don't win, and we move on, but we get a bill off the floor of the Senate. The House passed their bill in July, and here we are in December and our work has not been completed.

I would simply say to the majority leader, if he asks me, as he did, how can we get a farm bill? Let's start it. Call it up. Let's let amendments be filed, debated, and voted on. I assure you we will move this farm bill. I am here Saturday, Sunday, nights, holidays, whatever the majority leader suggests.

We are here to do a farm bill, and I think I also speak for Senator HARKIN that he will be here, and we will get this done.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator HARKIN told me today Senator CHAMBLISS and he had agreed to about 40 amendments; is that valid?

Mr. CHAMBLISS. We have not agreed to that. We have been working together.

Mr. REID. See, Mr. President, this is the problem we have all the time. The Chairman, Senator HARKIN, said Senator CHAMBLISS and he had agreed to have less than 40 amendments. I said, fine. But it is always this rope-a-dope—no, it is not 40; we are still working on it. Of the 287, half of those are gone. And I guess half of that would be 143. We are down on the Republican side. Maybe they can get rid of two-thirds of them.

There is always some reason we cannot go to the bill. It is very easy to say if we had had an open process, we could have been to conference. That is foolishness. I repeat, we know what farm bills are. It takes a while to work through them. But in recent history, we have averaged one nonrelevant amendment per farm bill. I am willing to take nonrelevant amendments, but no one will tell us what they will agree to. I agreed to 10, 5, and then Senator HARKIN said we can have 40. I said sign them up, let's do 40.

The ranking member of the committee says: Well, we are still working on it. That is what we have had. I want all ranching and farming families to hear what is going on here, which has gone on for weeks. Whether the purpose is to stop Democrats from passing a farm bill, I don't know. Maybe the ranking member simply doesn't want a bill. There may be reasons for that. We had a bipartisan bill. Twenty percent of the Senate voted on the bill. Twenty-one Members of the Senate are members of the Agriculture Committee, and they voted to report the bill out here. But there has been no movement on it. Cloture is ripening now, and we will move forward.

To show what is going on, we have filed cloture on AMT, the bill that came from the House. We filed cloture on the farm bill; we are going to file cloture tomorrow on the Energy bill. Everything we do, we have to procedurally go through all of these hoops because the Republicans are on steroids as it relates to filibusters. They are going to break all records. They will break a 2-year record this year. I think the American people are seeing what is going on.

The Republicans are demanding the status quo, in spite of our accomplishments. We have had a lot of accomplishments, Mr. President. We can run through the list, but we need not do that. But there have been large, significant, and important accomplishments. Accomplishments are not enough. We believe in changing the status quo. We believe in the agents of change. They are agents of keeping things the way they are.

The American people want things changed, and we want to be part of that change. We hope we will be joined by our Republican colleagues to change a few things. Let's have a new farm bill. Let's not have to extend the farm bill

that is now in existence. Let's try to do something with AMT, rather than walk out of here and have people saying it is too bad the Democrats didn't do AMT.

I have said that I defy anybody to come up with a way to do AMT other than the way I have suggested: Vote on the House bill, which is fully paid for; do the Lott proposal, which eliminates it and costs a trillion dollars; do what Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS reported, that we pay for the extenders, not for the AMT. This morning I suggested don't pay for it. But, no. Silence.

I am disappointed but not surprised at how we have been treated today.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, let me respond to the distinguished majority leader by saying that when he says I don't want a farm bill, nothing could be further from the truth. I already voted for this farm bill. I am ready to vote for this farm bill that came out of the Agriculture Committee tonight.

But when he says also that they are the advocates of change, what he is proposing is a change in the process when it comes to farm bills. We do think the status quo on farm bills is the direction we ought to go, which is a free and open amendment process, to let the will of the Senate operate relative to farm policy.

This is a critical 5-year bill for every farmer and rancher in America. If we limit the ability of folks to certain areas of concern, then we are not giving every farmer and rancher in America the opportunity to have their case made in the Senate. So I simply say I am ready to bring a farm bill to the floor. I have been ready for 5 weeks to do it. Senator HARKIN and I have not even had a discussion today about 40 amendments. I am not sure where that came from. There has been absolutely no conversation between Senator HARKIN and myself about that.

I am prepared to move forward. If the majority leader will call up the farm bill, let's start the amendment process, debate, and votes. I am here to do it.

Thank you.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Georgia talking about his experience here. But I have a little bit of experience, too. I have been here a quarter century. I know how farm bills work. Anybody can look at the record. Farm bills have been handled the way I have talked about them being handled.

If the Senator from Georgia so likes this bill that he voted for, what would be wrong with voting cloture with us and allowing people who have germane amendments to the farm bill to offer them? What in the world is wrong with that? I say, respectfully, that the Senator is speaking out of both sides of his mouth when he is saying he supports this bill, when he is not willing to vote for cloture and accept germane amendments. He wants some other process so they can deal with driver's licenses for illegal immigrants and other issues that have nothing to do with the farm

bill. They are trying to send a message. I have said we will accept x number of amendments, and I spoke to Senator HARKIN and he said they worked on this today. I thought he had spoken to the Senator from Georgia. Maybe it was staff driven, but he said they agreed to 40 amendments. I said sign the deal up. Or let's agree to 50 amendments. But we cannot get any agreement. We are in a rope-a-dope, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this sounds somewhat similar to the discussion the majority leader and I had earlier today, so I will not belabor this. Sometimes it is harder to get a consent agreement limiting Members' opportunities to offer amendments than it is to call up a bill and process amendments, which is the way we have done farm bills in the past.

Six years ago, a Democratic majority filed cloture a couple times and cloture was not invoked. The bill was put aside, and we came back later and finished it in a week, with no consent agreements, no limitations, nothing. We disposed of the amendments. That is the way to pass this bill.

With regard to the AMT, this is a bill upon which there is a possibility of a consent agreement limiting amendments. In fact, I offered one yesterday that would limit the AMT consideration to four amendments. So we can get, on the AMT, a consent agreement that would make that possible to be dealt with in short order.

I repeat my request of the majority leader to take a look at that and see if we cannot enter into a consent agreement to wrap up the AMT.

Regarding floor time, we have spent the whole day doing nothing. Today, we could have been on the farm bill processing amendments and moving us down that path. Senator CHAMBLISS indicated, before I came to the floor, that the list on our side could be significantly narrowed. Why don't we, at some point, look at that, and we will have fewer and fewer amendments to deal with. I don't know what we intend to do on the floor next week, but if most of the work of the Senate right now is going on in negotiations off the floor, why not be doing the farm bill on the floor and processing amendments and moving forward like the Senate normally does?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is interesting that when you offer to the Republicans the opportunity to have a farm bill and debate the issues on the bill, they reject it. They want to debate a lot of other things. They want to bring up a lot of other issues. I recall the list of amendments, including one from the Senator from Alaska regarding the *Exxon Valdez* litigation. That is an important issue, but is it a farm bill issue? Would the Senator from Georgia

argue with me that that has no place on the farm bill? Why would that be on the list? I am sure it is a valid idea.

When it comes to AMT, 19 million Americans are going to get hit with this tax if we don't do something. The Senator from Kentucky says we should engage in a debate on the Senate floor on the flat tax. What? Yes, the flat tax. That is one of their amendments. They want to toss out the entire Internal Revenue Code and replace it with a flat tax. We have to argue that before we take up the AMT. That is what we are hearing from the Republicans.

Does that sound like it is responsible, like it addresses the issues we were sent to deal with? Every time we get to a substantive issue, Senator REID comes to the floor and says let's narrow the amendments, have the debate, and decide it up or down. We will give you your chance to offer amendments related to the bill, and we will see how it ends. How much fairer can that be? They reject it.

Time and again, they reject it because they don't want us to achieve anything in this session. Fifty-six times this year they have created a filibuster situation. Now, people who don't follow the Senate may not know what that means, but if you saw "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" and watched Jimmy Stewart crumple at his desk when he had run out of steam and could not talk anymore, that is what a filibuster is all about. That is what the Republicans are all about—talk, talk, talk—or in the modern era, recess, quorum call, recess, quorum call.

Some Senator said to me it reminds him of when Abraham Lincoln contacted a general during the Civil War and said: If you are not going to use the Army, can you let me use it to execute the war?

If we are not going to use the Senate floor to do the business of the American people, can we set up a flea market or something, so that something positive is happening?

The Republicans are determined to stop anything substantive from happening. We want to take up the AMT tax and protect 19 million taxpayers. They are going to stop us. When they stop us, they are going to blame us. We saw that earlier in the day. The Republican leadership stopped a bill, and a Senator said we are just not taking up appropriations bills. They cannot have it both ways.

I listened to Senator REID, and I detected a note of frustration. How many weeks have we wasted trying to get through a farm bill that passed overwhelmingly on a bipartisan basis? They want to consider an amendment on the *Exxon Valdez* spill on the farm bill. I am sorry, but there are important things in that bill that need to pass, and they should not be held hostage to the whim of every Senator on the Republican side who has an idea. I am sure we could have a spirited debate about the future of the flat tax. But it is getting close to Christmas, and we

are supposed to get this done before we leave. We will never get it done if every Senator on the Republican side who dreams up another debate topic is given another half day or 2 days to pursue it.

At some point, leadership involves responsibility. At this point, I think the Republicans are being irresponsible because they refuse to let us do the people's business. They want to protect the status quo. They don't want this to change. They want to make this a do-nothing Congress just like the last Congress, when they were in charge. We are trying our best to avoid that. The honest answer may be that we need more votes on this side of the aisle so we can stop this, so we can move ahead and make some real changes in farm policy and tax policy. We would not reach that point if the Republican strategy continues—filibusters and blocking, coming up with excuses, and spending months on a bill that should have taken days.

That is their plan, their policy. That is what they believe in. That is the best they can offer the American people. That is why the Republican Party leadership in the Congress has been summarily rejected by the American people. They are sick of it. They want bipartisan cooperation, progress, and they want change.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with Senator AKAKA speaking for up to 5 minutes, Senator MENENDEZ for up to 15 minutes, Senator MURRAY for up to 5 minutes, and Senator WYDEN for up to 5 minutes.

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

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

#### COMMENDING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII WARRIOR FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the University of Hawaii Warrior football team, which completed the first undefeated season in the team's history, securing a first-ever appearance in the Sugar Bowl on New Year's Day.

Facing powerful schools from across the country, this dedicated, hard working, selfless team found the courage, strength and discipline to emerge victorious from every challenge. A spirit of support and teamwork, as well as confidence under pressure, made this historic undefeated season possible.

In addition to their victories on the field, the Warrior football players have also introduced viewers to the diverse cultures they represent. They have become positive role models for young people not only in Hawaii, but in Samoa, Australia, around the South

Pacific and in communities across the United States.

They have made many people proud. They honor the people and land of Hawaii before every game. They have shared our unique culture with the world.

The Warriors have brought the people of Hawaii together, united in supporting this incredible team that continues to defy the odds. I join the people of Hawaii in congratulating the University of Hawaii Warrior football team and rooting for victory in the Sugar Bowl New Year's Day in New Orleans.

As we say in Hawaii, "Hana Hou," do it again! Go Warriors!

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### COUNTY PAYMENTS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues, especially Senator MURRAY and Senator MENENDEZ, for their courtesy. I will be brief.

Today the House and Senate announced a historic package to address the energy crisis facing our Nation. But in addition, as part of that important legislation, the agreement contains more than \$1.8 billion in desperately needed funding for our Nation's rural schools, counties, and communities.

Without the safety net funding provided as part of the energy legislation, rural communities across this country could literally be wiped off the map. Without this critical funding, rural counties across America will once again be staring down into a precipice and a future filled with closed schools, terminated services, and deteriorating roads. Within months, pink slips could again be sent to teachers and to county workers.

Fortunately, some help for those rural communities is now on the way. The energy package contains an extension of the Secure Rural Schools Program that I authored in 2000. This proposal closely mirrors the legislative proposal that was crafted with Senators BAUCUS, BINGAMAN, REID, and myself, a proposal that passed overwhelmingly in this body by a 74-to-23 vote as an amendment that I offered to the war emergency supplemental spending bill last spring.

Specifically, the new energy package provides 4 more years of funding for the Secure Rural Schools Program, commonly known as the County Payments Program. A year of full funding for the payment in lieu of taxes program has also been included. By providing funds through 2011, this deal gets our rural counties off the fiscal roller coaster and back to stable funding so they can get at the real work of planning for the future. Today's announcement would mean \$1.8 billion in critical funding for school and road programs across America.

In our home State of Oregon, particularly when folks are suffering because

of the bad weather, it would mean hundreds of millions of dollars for schools and public safety, roads, and other essential county services. This program has been a successful one. It has been built around collaboration among counties, environmentalists, timber interests, and others, and the funds are absolutely critical to our rural communities.

The legislation that has been agreed to today, the Energy bill, is very important to our country's future. But equally important is the legislation known as the County Payments Program for rural communities.

I am grateful to my colleague, Senator MURRAY, and Senator MENENDEZ, who have been waiting patiently for the chance to make this announcement, and it is my hope that with the unflagging support of rural folks from across the country that this much-needed energy legislation will move forward and the country can look to a brighter future for rural communities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### WASHINGTON STATE FLOODS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from New Jersey for allowing me to speak before he does. I wish to speak today because, as we all know, in the last several days, the Pacific Northwest has been hit by devastating storms. We have seen wind and dangerous floods and mud slides that have cut off our roads, our homes, cut off power to literally thousands in my State.

Today, the pouring rain thankfully has subsided a bit, but thousands of people are coping with the damage in my State, in my region. We will not know the full impact of this storm for some time, but our Governor has already estimated that the cost is going to be in the billions of dollars.

My heart goes out to everyone in my home State of Washington and in Oregon who are coping with the aftermath of this tremendous storm. Those people are in my thoughts constantly. I am working with all of our State, local, and Federal entities to be sure everyone gets all the service and support they need at this critical time.

I especially thank and mention our Governor, Governor Gregoire of Washington State. She has been very strong in her leadership throughout this disaster and has been working tirelessly to coordinate the rescue efforts.

I especially today send a very heartfelt thanks to all of our rescue workers. They have been working out in these torrential rains, night and day, rescuing people from flooded homes and vehicles. They have been flying in supplies to people who are stranded. They have been working very hard to clear roads and railways that are still tonight swamped.

So far, the Navy, the Coast Guard, the National Guard, and all of our