

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GREGG. Reserving the right to object, I suspect at a later time this will, hopefully, be worked out—hopefully sooner rather than later—but at this time I am going to have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would simply say to my friend, I hope that is the case. I hope we can move to this. I am a little suspect because we have been trying to work something out for quite a long time now. I will renew this request sometime later today, and I hope we can accomplish what we need to get accomplished.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I think most of us are a little distressed that the other side is objecting to a request which is a huge concession on the part of this Senator, as well as most of the Senators on this side of the aisle, and that would be helping the other side, and that is that we are agreeing to pass AMT not paid for. Why? Because we need to get the AMT patch fixed. We don't want the American taxpayers to have to pay additional taxes under the alternative minimum. We want to get this fixed right away.

It is also important to remind us that time is of the essence because the IRS has to get out the correct forms. The computer programs have to be written properly. So I very much hope that very quickly the other side will no longer object and we can get this passed.

Mr. President, this reminds me of an old joke, and the joke goes like this: There was a big flood, and a man of faith heard about it on the radio. But he did not flee to higher ground. He said: No, I'll put my trust in God. I am not going to flee to higher ground, even though there is this big flood, which I heard about on the radio. I'll put my trust in God.

Well, the waters surrounded the man's home. And as he was standing on his front porch, a boat came up and the skipper said: Jump in, I'll take you to safety. And the man said: No, I'm going to put my trust in God.

Well, the boat went away, and the water rose up to the roof. So the man stood on the roof, and a helicopter came and dropped a ladder, and the pilot yelled down: Climb up the ladder, I'll save you. But the man, said: No, I'm going to stay. I'll put my trust in God.

So the helicopter flew away, and the water continued to rise, and the man drowned. The man went to Heaven, and God asked him: What are you doing here? The man said: I put my trust in you, and you let me down.

Well, God said: What do you mean I let you down? I sent you a message, I sent you a boat, I sent you a helicopter. I tried to save you three times.

I think that is what the Republican caucus has done to the AMT. The

House passed a bill to prevent the AMT from hitting 19 million more taxpayers, but the Republican caucus said, no, we will wait for our own legislation. The majority leader asked unanimous consent to consider a compromise amendment that did not pay for the AMT but just paid for the extenders. The Republican caucus said, no, we will wait for our own legislation. And now the majority leader has once again asked consent to allow us to consider an amendment that does nothing but prevent new taxpayers from being hit by the AMT, and once again the Republican caucus said, no, we will wait for our own legislation.

Mr. President, at this point I want everyone to know if the AMT hits more taxpayers next year, it is not because of the House of Representatives. If the AMT hits more taxpayers next year, it is not because of the majority leader. If the AMT hits more taxpayers next year, it is not because of the Democratic caucus. If the AMT hits more taxpayers next year, it is because of the Republican caucus. That is clear. They cannot take yes for an answer.

We are trying to set it up so we can vote on a unanimous consent request to fix the AMT, unpaid for, and get it done now, but the Republican caucus says, no. They cannot take yes for an answer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business for debate only; that Senators be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would hope that everyone understands we have a lot of balls in the air, and we are trying to grab a few of them to see if in the next few days we can work through some of them.

We have AMT, which hasn't been completed. The farm bill and spending bills have to be completed. We have many different bills we are trying to complete. If everyone will be patient and speak to their heart's content, we will try to have something legislatively that we can work on.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

NEW LEADERSHIP POSITION

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I was called off the floor just as the majority leader was saying some very nice things about me. I heard most of them, but I regret I didn't hear them all. I will ask him to repeat them privately. But in any event, it is true we are neighbors and

as a result have had an opportunity to work together on a lot of items. It doesn't matter which side of the aisle we are on, we can certainly do that.

I also appreciated the old story about the lawyers who fight for their clients' interest during the day, going at it tooth and nail, but when the day is over they get together. But as I heard the story it wasn't that they got together for a sandwich, I always thought they got together for a drink at the end of the day. But recognizing the majority leader's bent, I appreciate the story, and he certainly has my assurance that I will approach the position, which eventually I will take in a matter of a few days, in that same spirit.

Again, I appreciate the comments he made.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor today with my colleague, Senator SMITH.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Republican leader wish to be recognized?

Mr. McCONNELL. Let me say to my friend from Oregon that I will not be long, and I appreciate the opportunity to pay tribute to a fallen soldier from my State.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT JOE L. DUNIGAN, JR.

Mr. McCONNELL. The Commonwealth of Kentucky is mourning today because of the loss of one of our finest soldiers, and I am speaking of SSG Joe L. Dunigan, Jr., of Benton. He was 37 years old.

Staff Sergeant Dunigan's assignment was guarding a convoy of U.S. marines near Fallujah in Iraq when on March 11, 2004, an explosive device, set by terrorists, detonated near his humvee, tragically taking his life.

For the valor and bravery he displayed over two decades of service, the U.S. Army honored Staff Sergeant Dunigan with numerous medals and awards, including the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Staff Sergeant Dunigan, who will always be remembered by his family as Joey, wore his country's uniform for 20 years because he was proud to serve. Joey "lived his life the way he served his country—he was gung-ho about everything," says his stepfather, Sammie Bryant. And Joey was gung-ho from a very early age.

His family remembers that growing up Joey loved playing army. His favorite toy was GI Joe. In fact, family members often called him GI Joey. As a young boy, he participated in Cub Scouting and was an avid player of baseball and football.

Joey was also musically inclined, playing the trombone in the Marshall County High School Marching Marshals band. He enjoyed watching NASCAR races and was a big fan of

driver Jeff Gordon. In fact, his family remembers fondly the time Joey was able to attend a NASCAR race at the Talladega Superspeedway in Talladega, AL, and he saw Jeff Gordon bring home the checkered flag.

Joey graduated from Marshall County High School in May of 1984, and that August he enlisted in the U.S. Army, a month before his 18th birthday. He told his mother, Dena Bryant, that she should either give her permission for him to enlist at age 17 or he would enlist as soon as he turned 18, but either way, he was enlisting. "He was very serious about enlisting because he wanted to serve his country," says a letter written by Joey's family and sent to me by his mother, Dena. So Dena gave her permission, and Joey became a soldier.

After completing basic training in Fort Benning, GA, Joey deployed to Germany for his first tour of duty. Over the course of his Army career, he would also serve two tours of duty in South Korea and inspire many younger soldiers through his work as an Army recruiter stationed in Nashville.

In September 2003, Joey was deployed to Iraq as a member of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, based at Fort Riley, KS.

Wherever he served, Joey excelled at earning the respect and admiration of his fellow soldiers. "He would have made an excellent drill instructor," says his stepfather, Sammie. "When he walked into a room, you could hear him above all the others."

Family was important to Joey Dunigan. With Joey's guidance, his younger brother, Michael Bryant, followed Joey's example and joined the U.S. Air Force. And at the center of Joey's life were his wife, Misty, and his two sons, Dustin and Jessie.

As an older, more experienced soldier, Joey looked after the younger men serving alongside him. He knew the difficulties of serving far away from family and loved ones. In an email he wrote to his mother, Dena, Joey wrote, "Please continue to remember me and the guys."

He shared with his fellow soldiers his sturdy sense of humor, even in the face of hard combat duty. Despite their sadness, family and friends break into smiles when remembering Joey Dunigan. "He didn't want to have sad moments," Dena recalls. "He didn't like to be serious. He was a gung-ho, vivacious young man. He was happy, bubbly, infectious."

The day after Staff Sergeant Dunigan's family received the tragic news of his death, an American flag flew at half-staff outside of Dena and Sammie Bryant's home. Joey was buried at the cemetery of his home church in Benton, KY," on March 21, 2004.

He will be forever remembered by his wife, Misty; his sons, Dustin and Jessie; his mother and stepfather, Dena and Sammie Bryant; his father, Joe; his sister, Robin Colley; his brother,

Michael Bryant; his grandfather, Paul Henson; and many other beloved family members and friends.

I want to leave my colleagues with the words of Joey's family, written in that letter sent to me by his mother that I mentioned earlier. "Joey is a hero," they write. "He loved God, his family, Marshall County and his country. He was born to and dedicated to protect his country and fellow man."

I'm glad Mrs. Bryant sent me this letter. It expresses the depths of her son's courage and convictions far better than I can. In return, I want his family to know that the U.S. Senate salutes SSG Joe L. Dunigan Jr.'s service. And his country will always honor his selfless sacrifice.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

DISASTER IN OREGON

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today with my colleague Senator SMITH because many Oregonians are hurting at home today. For 3 days this week our State has been slammed by a storm, the strength of which boggles the mind—hurricane force winds with gusts exceeding 120 miles an hour and almost a foot of rain, raising water levels in some areas by 25 feet in less than 48 hours. Hundreds of our people are now in shelters, tens of thousands are without power and don't have phones.

Thousands of Oregonians have been willing to step forward with incredible acts of courage and generosity. Using helicopters and boats, the Oregon National Guard and the Coast Guard have come through for our folks, rescuing hundreds of people trapped by rising water. Along with activating the National Guard, the Governor has brought every State agency in to help take care of the needs of the displaced, get communications restored, fix the roads, clear the bridges, and begin to assess the extraordinary damage.

We especially today, both of Oregon's Senators, thank the Oregon chapter of the Red Cross, because they immediately moved into the affected areas and opened shelters. They provided meals and they have now been assisting with the cleanup.

The Governor has asked the President to declare a major disaster in our State and all of the Oregon congressional delegation joins the Governor in urging the President to grant this request immediately.

Folks from FEMA, the emergency management agency, have arrived in our State. They are going to begin making formal damage assessments today.

Senator SMITH and I talked to Secretary Chertoff on the phone and we asked for the Department of Homeland Security to pull out all the stops to aid our State immediately. The immediate priority is to get our citizens the help they need to survive during these crit-

ical days. Once the full extent of the damage is known, Oregon and Washington, the hard-hit Pacific Northwest, are going to need Federal assistance in recovering from the disaster. This is surely going to entail rebuilding roads and other essential parts of our infrastructure.

Senator SMITH and I are committed this morning to getting the help that is so urgently needed by the people of Oregon. We believe it is critical in terms of timing that this help be made available now so folks can get back on their feet. We intend to pursue a variety of options, including adding emergency funding to future spending bills if that is necessary.

I yield the rest of my time to my colleague Senator SMITH. We believe on Oregon issues there are no partisan questions. Today the people of our State are hurting and both of Oregon's Senators are committed to getting the help that is needed to sustain lives at home, to the Pacific Northwest, and the people of Oregon immediately.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for being here with me today. Moments ago, we phoned Secretary Chertoff to discuss how we, as Oregon Senators, can best help those of our State who have been devastated by this storm. Both Senator WYDEN and I wish we could be with them now. On Monday, Senator WYDEN and I hosted our sixth annual economic forum in Portland. We rushed to the airport after the event in the midst of this incredible storm to find that our outgoing flight was unable land in such horrendous conditions. We fortunate enough to find another flight to Washington so we could be present for Tuesday's vote.

Again, we would both like to be with the citizens of our State. We are instead using what leverage we have in Washington to ensure the Federal Government responds to the best of its ability. We have called upon the President to declare this event a major disaster and free up Federal resources to begin rebuilding this devastated area.

We would like in particular to commend FEMA and the U.S. Coast Guard. FEMA took a lot of criticism as a result of Hurricane Katrina, but their response in Oregon has been spectacular. We thank them on behalf of all Oregonians.

We also thank the Coast Guard. Within the first 24 hours, the Coast Guard responded to well over 600 emergency calls and was able to save a tremendous number of lives. For this, we thank them.

As I consider our country, our values and the kinds of catastrophes that have beset our country, we understand that we cannot stop Mother Nature. But these catastrophes cannot and will not break the spirit of the American people. I look at the great motto above your desk, sir, *E pluribus unum*—out of