

clearly understand the values and principles that make us who we are. The truth is no one will fight long, either literally or figuratively, for values and principles he doesn't understand.

Americans must know what is worth fighting for, must maintain the willpower to do it, and must apply the lessons of our past to our current threats. So we must find a way to help students understand the values and the principles upon which our Nation is founded. The solution begins at a fundamental level of learning and education. Our students need textbooks that capture the life of history—Bill Bennett suggests a national contest for better history textbooks—and draw young people to the study of our Nation's story.

The solution, however, must go beyond changes to curriculum. As a nation, we must learn to embrace our history again and discard the politically correct, relativistic version of our history that has persisted for far too long. We must act now to preserve for future generations what we know to be so important. Let us get about the job.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HOUSING CRISIS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, over the last year, Americans across the country have watched as our economy has faltered, and for far too many families the economic downturn has hit home in the form of a foreclosure. This is a time when we badly need a strong and effective response from the administration led, in part, by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

But instead of helping the millions of families who are struggling to stay above water, HUD has been almost constantly distracted by the ethical questions that have been facing its Secretary, Alphonso Jackson. Ten days ago, I felt the problem had reached a breaking point, so I called for Secretary Jackson's resignation. Today, Mr. Jackson announced he has decided to move on, and President Bush must now nominate a new Housing Secretary with the experience and the credibility to attack this crisis rather than hide from it.

Mr. President, I hope this development is a sign that the administration wants to finally make the needs of American families a priority. I hope it is a sign that the administration wants to work with Congress on a meaningful response to the crisis that has swept across this Nation. I hope President Bush will change his position and sup-

port our effort to pass legislation that will help millions of families who are facing foreclosure today.

This week, we will give President Bush and the Republican Senators that chance again as we take up the Foreclosure Prevention Act for the second time this year. Until now, it seems that some on the other side of the aisle have been more responsive to Wall Street than Main Street.

So I hope my colleagues who were home over the break have listened, as I have, to the concerns of their constituents and have now returned ready to work and address our Nation's housing crisis. This truly is a crisis. I wish to spend a couple minutes talking about why we have to take action now.

As many as 2 million American families are going to lose their homes to foreclosure this year. Each foreclosure represents a family whose dream of a comfortable home and secure future has been dashed. Each foreclosure weakens the foundation of our entire economy and our communities. Foreclosures have left our neighborhoods full of vacant homes. Foreclosures have left our families distressed and troubled, and communities are now reporting a higher crime rate as a result of this crisis. State and local governments are seeing their tax revenues drop even as their needs are piling up. We in Congress can help prevent this by investing in our communities and providing support for families who risk losing everything.

The Foreclosure Prevention Act would make changes in bankruptcy laws so that more financially troubled families could keep their homes. It would change lending laws to prevent more borrowers from accepting terms they don't understand and cannot afford. It would provide an additional \$200 million to help housing counselors continue to reach out to families who are at risk of foreclosure.

I wish to focus on the last point because it is extremely important. Too many homeowners today don't know they can get help when they get behind on their mortgage. Too many of them don't contact their lender when they miss their first payment. Too many are just intimidated or don't feel they can trust anyone. The Foreclosure Prevention Act would give counseling agencies the resources they need to reach out and let borrowers know they have options. Counseling can help families negotiate with their lenders, readjust their payments, or learn how to budget their expenses better.

Last month, I had the opportunity to meet a single mother from Ohio. She had fallen on hard times which, in turn, led her to fall behind in her mortgage. Luckily, with housing counseling made possible by NeighborWorks America, she and her children were able to stay in their home. She explained to me that when she got behind, she was simply overwhelmed; she didn't know what to do. She said this is not something about which they teach you in school.

Our economic health in this country depends on Americans having a safe and stable place to live and raise their families. We want every family to know there is help out there. The Foreclosure Prevention Act would help make sure families that risk losing everything get the help they need before it is too late.

Across this country, people are worried about whether they are going to be able to keep their homes, whether their jobs will be eliminated, and how they are going to pay for health care when they or their children get sick. These are real families, and these are real communities in need of help.

We need to pass this reform immediately. Americans want action. We wanted to pass it last month, and we were stopped by Republican efforts to block this bill. So I hope now, as we have returned from the recess, President Bush and our Republican colleagues will support our efforts. I hope they will come with us tomorrow, stand with us, and pass meaningful reform that will give homeowners the help they need, allow them to keep their homes, give their families hope, and ultimately make our communities strong again.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for as long as I may need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, many of my fellow Americans are very aware of the exhilaration but also the dangers and risks of commercial fishing in Alaska's Bering Sea. The pictures and the stories—and even the sounds—are brought into our living rooms every week on the Discovery Channel program "The Deadliest Catch." Many have seen it.

When the Bering Sea fishing fleet finds itself in trouble, they rely on the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard to truly make order from the chaos. These stories have not escaped Hollywood's attention. It is not only seen on "The Deadliest Catch," but there was a 2006 feature film, "The Guardian," starring Kevin Costner and Ashton Kutcher, which paid tribute to the Coast Guard search and rescue teams based at Air Station Kodiak in Alaska. Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak is home to aircrews and rescue swimmers who endure some of the

harshest winds and seas in the world. They put their own lives on the line every day so that others may live.

The events that were depicted in "The Guardian" were fictional, but the events that transpired this past Easter morning in the Bering Sea were very real. I rise today to honor the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard who participated in efforts to rescue the 47-member crew of the fishing vessel *Alaska Ranger*. As a direct result of these heroic efforts, 42 members of the *Ranger's* crew survived. There were no Coast Guard lives lost. In the words of RADM Arthur Brooks, commander of the Seventeenth Coast Guard District, it was "one of the greatest search and rescue efforts in modern history."

Let me kind of paint the scene for you. It was 2:52 a.m. local time on Easter Sunday, March 23, that the *Alaska Ranger*, a Seattle-based factory trawler, radioed the Coast Guard Communications Station Kodiak with a distress call. The vessel at that time was located 120 miles west of Dutch Harbor at the end of the Aleutian Chain. The vessel was taking on water. There were 25-knot winds and seas 6 to 8 feet high.

The Coast Guard immediately launched a rescue effort. There was a cutter, two helicopters, and a C-130. The crew of the *Ranger* had to abandon ship before the first Coast Guard asset arrived.

First to arrive on the scene is a Coast Guard Jayhawk Rescue Helicopter, deployed from St. Paul Island, located about 230 miles to the north of where the *Alaska Ranger* was at the time.

The Jayhawk carried a crew of four men. There was no backup. The Jayhawk arrives on the scene about 5:30 a.m. This is about 2½ hours after the first distress call. This helps put in perspective the distances with which we are dealing. By this point in time, the *Alaska Ranger* has already sunk in the water. The vessel is completely gone. It has already sunk in water that is more than 6,300 feet deep.

The air crew flies in and looks upon this sea of flashing strobe lights. Keep in mind, this is 5:30 in the morning. It is still dark. They have wind and sleet and waves coming up, and they see this sea of flashing strobe lights, probably a mile end to end. They are looking down at this scene through the helicopter thinking there is a light there: Is that a liferaft? Yet another light and another light. Each light is a member of the *Ranger's* crew wearing a survival suit. Some are in liferafts, but others were literally in this human chain stretching almost a mile in length. Others are floating alone. The water temperature in the sea is about 32 degrees.

Rescue swimmer O'Brien Hollow is lowered into the water to triage the survivors. One by one, he positions the survivors to be hoisted into the helicopter above. The helicopter is tossing above in these very heavy winds. Hollow is tethered to the helicopter from above.

We also have then the Coast Guard cutter *Munro*. It has been diverted from its position 130 nautical miles south of the incident. It is racing to the scene at the speed of about 30 knots.

The *Munro* carries a Dolphin rescue helicopter which lifts off the *Munro* some 80 miles before the cutter arrives at the scene.

Rescue swimmer Abram Heller is lowered into the water and begins to gather victims to be hoisted into the basket to be lifted up into the helicopter. Heller stays in the water to make room on the Dolphin for survivors.

One has to remember, they have some 47 men in the water. They are trying to lift them into the basket and then into the helicopter, but the helicopter can only accommodate so many people. The rescue swimmer is saying: I am going to stay down here; move this group to safety.

The Jayhawk then departs the scene for the *Munro*, but the Jayhawk cannot land on the cutter's deck because it is too big. So the Jayhawk crew hoists the survivors down to the *Munro's* deck one by one. Just as they have been lifting survivors out of the sea into this helicopter that is pitching around in the air, they now have to be dropped down to the deck one at a time in the basket.

In the meantime, a fuel line is sent up from the *Munro's* deck to refuel the Jayhawk, and it then departs to the scene.

The Jayhawk recovers Heller, the rescue swimmer who has been down there with the survivors, and rescues more survivors. In total, the Jayhawk is responsible for saving 15 lives. The Dolphin saves five lives.

The third player in this supremely heroic effort is a Coast Guard C-130, which circled over the scene serving as an airborne coordination and communications platform.

The Coast Guard also received substantial assistance from the *Ranger's* sister fishing vessel, the *Alaska Warrior*. The *Alaska Warrior* also had been out on the *Alaska* fishing grounds. They left their fishing grounds to pick up 22 survivors from the *Ranger* who were in liferafts and then returned them to Dutch Harbor.

Unfortunately, four of the *Ranger's* crew members could not be saved. One still remains unaccounted for. The Coast Guard sent the Jayhawk and a C-130 back to the scene with fresh crews to search for the missing mariner but without success. The search for the missing crew member was suspended on Tuesday, March 25.

The Coast Guard uses the maritime phrase "Bravo Zulu" to recognize a job well done, and this was truly a job well done. While the Coast Guard rigorously trains its people to perform this mission, it is very rare to undertake a mission of this intensity and this complexity.

Rescue swimmers Hollow and Heller had participated in rescues before but

nothing approaching this kind of a rescue. In fact, rescues of this nature are extremely rare. After very carefully examining the records dating back over 30 years, the Coast Guard could only find a couple mass rescue cases that were even remotely similar to what we experienced on Easter.

While dramatic search-and-rescue cases are no stranger to Alaska, most involve 10 victims or less. Others involve a much more orderly abandonment of a vessel. This was the case in 1980, when the cruise ship *Prinsendam* went down near Yakutat, AK. But large numbers of people abandoning ship directly into the water hardly ever happens. That is one more reason why this rescue effort was remarkable. But it is not the only reason.

The risks that were involved in this case were extreme. They had, again, darkness, extremely high winds, high seas, ice, freezing temperatures, extremely long distances from any supporting infrastructure, and all these conditions present unique hazards to the rescuers.

Success such as this could not occur without the commitment of a great many people. The crews of the Jayhawk, the Dolphin, and the *Munro* will long be remembered for their heroism.

Backing them were the watchstanders at Coast Guard Communications Station Kodiak. These were the folks who answered the *Alaska Ranger's* mayday call. The C-130 crews, the Kodiak Air Station duty officers, and the District 17 command center controllers in Juneau also contributed. In total, something on the order of 170 Alaska-based Coast Guard men and women were involved in this effort.

ADM Thad Allen has already expressed "Bravo Zulu" to all the men and women involved with this effort. I am honored to take a few minutes from the Senate's day to praise these men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard on a job well done. Our Nation is always well served by these highly trained individuals who stand "always ready."

AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT OF 2008

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes today to speak about legislation I introduced before we went on our 2-week recess. This is legislation that is cosponsored by my colleague, the senior Senator from Alaska, Mr. STEVENS.

It made great sense when the price of oil hit \$111.72 a barrel, which is an all-time record high, and it still makes sense today, even with the price of oil having declined to \$101, as it is today. It is a bill that will call for the United States to actually take steps to produce more oil, to actually help increase global supplies of petroleum to lower prices, and to use all the Federal revenues from the oil production to fund many forms of alternative energy and the programs that help Americans deal with high energy and food prices.