

work to be done. There are far too many vacant lots and empty slabs that remain around our gulf coast for our recovery to be considered complete.

Mississippians are appreciative of the assistance the Federal Government has provided to aid in their recovery from Hurricane Katrina. However, a significant additional opportunity to assist that recovery will have been lost if the issue of affordable wind insurance is not addressed.

One of the most significant impediments to the recovery of the Mississippi gulf coast is the availability of affordable homeowners insurance. There are many coastal residents who simply cannot afford to insure their homes, and homes cannot be rebuilt until they have secured insurance.

One of the most expensive components of these homeowners insurance premiums is coverage for damage caused by wind.

Most coastal Mississippians are currently being forced to buy their wind coverage from the State-run wind pool. This wind pool is necessary because the private insurance industry has largely discontinued selling wind policies in these coastal communities.

So a program that was designed as an insurer of last resort has become the only available option. Those who are able to buy coverage from this State wind pool have found their premiums increased dramatically over the last 2 years.

Unfortunately, this is a shortsighted solution. There is simply too much risk, in too small of a pool, concentrated into a small geographic area. This is not a problem that is unique to Mississippi. Most State wind pools face the same problem of not being able to spread the risk wide enough to avoid an overwhelming loss in the event of a significant hurricane.

I wish to be clear. This is not only an amendment for those who were impacted by Hurricane Katrina. This amendment would benefit millions of Americans who live on our vast coastlines and face the potential of a future catastrophic hurricane.

This amendment would allow homeowners to buy insurance and know in advance of the storm that they will be covered without a prolonged dispute over whether the damage was caused by wind or water.

This wind coverage will be available only where local governments enforce strict building standards to minimize future loss. The premiums for this coverage would be actuarially sound and would not expose the Federal Government to undue financial risk.

A great deal of thought has gone into my recommendation of this amendment. I urge a vote in support of the amendment. If private insurers or the State-run wind pools could adequately address this problem, then I would not as vigorously advocate the Federal Government expanding its role in the business of insurance.

But Senator WICKER's amendment provides the best available solution for this very serious problem.

As the 2008 hurricane season approaches, I believe we should not miss this opportunity to address this growing problem. The Wicker amendment provides us with the best opportunity to make certain affordable wind insurance is available for those living near our coastlines.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR.) The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. CASEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2980 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have been very patient today. I so wanted to come to the floor, after the FAA bill was destroyed, wiped out by the Republicans not letting us go to that legislation, one of the most important pieces of legislation we could deal with. The reason I had to calm myself down, I listened to a number of Republican Senators say: Well, if we could have offered amendments. I did everything I could to allow people to offer amendments: Agree to a list of amendments; could we see your amendment; we will take down the tree; we will do anything you want; offer amendments.

Finally, I spoke to one of the Republican leaders. I said: It is obvious the only reason you are not supporting this is because of the New York money, the final installment of the \$20 billion promised the city of New York, the State of New York, by the President of the United States, George Bush. I said: It is in the President's budget.

One of the Republican leaders said: We still oppose it.

Then, if that were not enough, we now come to an important piece of legislation, flood insurance. This is a result of what happened in Katrina and the other devastating floods we have had in this country in recent years. Insurance companies have gone broke. Individual companies have gone broke. Individual homeowners have suffered significantly. So after months of working on this piece of legislation on a bipartisan basis—Senators DODD and SHELBY are the ones who worked to get the bill here—we bring the bill to the floor. We file cloture on a motion to

proceed so we can start offering amendments. It passes 90 to 1. We have been waiting since 3 o'clock today to start legislating. People are waiting to offer amendments. I can't imagine how the Republicans can sleep at night, stopping this country from legislating on most important issues. They act as if it is not important. So in the morning I am going to come here, and we are going to ask consent if we can start legislating on this bill, or do we have to wait until 9 o'clock tomorrow night until the 30 hours runs out before we can start legislating on flood insurance. We are going to finish flood insurance this week. If we have to work Thursday night, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, we are going to finish this bill.

People will have an opportunity to offer amendments. Maybe they can't start offering amendments until 9 o'clock tomorrow night, but if that is the case, then we are going to start working at 9 o'clock tomorrow night so people can offer their amendments, because tomorrow is Wednesday. We wasted all day today not being able to offer amendments. I am told there are only a couple amendments people want to offer—three or four. It is an issue of whether this legislation should include also wind. That is an issue we can debate and vote on. But we are going to make a decision sometime tomorrow as to when we file cloture, whether we do it Thursday and have a Saturday cloture vote, do it tomorrow and have a Friday cloture vote. We are going to finish this bill this week.

We have so much to do. We have the farm conference coming. We have the consumer product safety conference coming. We have to do the budget. We have the supplemental appropriations bill and a number of other measures we have to do.

I hope we can start moving to allow people to offer amendments. It seems not a very good legislative process dictated by the minority, the Republicans, when you pass something 90 to 1, and they still hold it up.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

FIRST LIEUTENANT MATTHEW R. VANDERGRIFT

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the service and sacrifice of Marine 1Lt Matthew Vandergrift, of Littleton, CO. Lieutenant Vandergrift was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, out of Camp Lajeune, NC. He was recently killed in Basra, Iraq, by a bomb that exploded near his humvee. He was 28 years old.

Those who knew Matthew Vandergrift describe him as a true patriot, committed to his country, his family, his friends, and to helping those around him. He was full of energy and laughter, and was always looking for the next adventure.

Matthew grew up in Austin, TX, and attended Texas A&M University, where he graduated with honors in 2005. He was a member of the Corps of Cadets and Naval ROTC at Texas A&M, majored in international business, and had a 4.0 grade point average.

When he became a marine in 2005, Matthew joined a proud family tradition of military service. His father was a major in the Marine Corps, his younger brother Barrett is an Air Force helicopter pilot, and his great uncle was GEN Alexander Vandergrift, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient and the 18th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

When he was killed, Lieutenant Vandergrift was in the middle of a year-long deployment that began last August. Tasked with helping train Iraqi security forces, his team of four marines lived and patrolled together with 50 Iraqis. They were performing sweeps in Basra in an attempt to calm violence, root out pockets of insurgents, and stand up an Iraqi unit that could take charge of the security responsibilities in the area. It was a dangerous mission in one of the most dangerous places in Iraq. But it was also a vital mission, and one that demanded the smarts, courage, and character for which Lieutenant Vandergrift was known.

Each of our men and women in uniform is a patriot—they stand up at the call of their country and assume the task of service. But Matthew Vandergrift was also a patriot in a broader sense. Frances Wright, one of America's most famous lecturers, reminds us that patriotism is not simply one's love and dedication to country. Patriotism, she observes, is a virtue that characterizes an individual's commitment to the public good, to the preference of the interests of the many to the interests of the few, and to the love of liberty. "A patriot," she told an Indiana crowd on July 4, 1828, "is a useful member of society, capable of enlarging all minds and bettering all hearts with which he comes in contact; a useful member of the human family, capable of establishing fundamental principles and of merging his own interests, those of his associates, and those of his nation in the interests of the human race."

We cannot count the hearts that Lieutenant Vandergrift touched nor the lives he bettered—that knowledge rests in the memories of those who knew him and served with him—but we may hope to emulate his model of patriotism. It is no easy task. It is rare that a man puts himself on the line for his country and for those with whom he served with such courage, with such heart, and with such a smile, as Matthew.

Lieutenant Matthew Vandergrift's stature in life is matched only by the depth of his sacrifice—and the void he leaves behind. To Matthew's family, I know no words that can ease the pain of losing a son or a brother. I hope that in time you will find consolation in the pride you must feel for Matthew's service and for the joy he brought to all who knew him. He was a patriot and a hero. His country will always honor his sacrifice.

#### CELEBRATING NATIONAL SALVATION ARMY WEEK

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I wish to share my enthusiasm for a celebration that is soon to take place across America, National Salvation Army Week. The Salvation Army has been serving and enriching American communities for over 125 years. Since 1954, when President Eisenhower declared the first National Salvation Army Week, local units and State divisions have used this time to celebrate the charitable work they have accomplished and call attention to forthcoming projects. It is a time of heightened activism for the organization and its members. But this week is also an opportunity, a chance for us to thank the corps' members for the wonderful gifts of servanthood and volunteerism they have shown.

I recognize the many lives the Salvation Army has touched through its important work, and I am deeply thankful for the men and women who offer their time and energy in realization of its cause.

Furthermore, I am especially pleased to note that several Indiana communities will be host to their own festivities in honor of this occasion.

In Chesterton, IN, a public concert will be held on Saturday, May 17, with a performance by the Chicago Brass Band. In Bloomington, interested parties will be able to partake in "Donut Day" on May 13 and a family Block Party on May 15. Columbus, IN, will fly the Salvation Army flag over its city hall for the entire week. Indianapolis will witness a "Ramp to Camp" fundraiser organized to send at-risk youth to summer camps. Fort Wayne-based Salvation Army volunteers will hold a Thank-a-Thon. New Albany, IN, will be the site of several open house events. The list continues; these are just a few of the many noteworthy events that I am confident will be a time of joy and fellowship for participants.

I hope you will join me in extending best wishes and fine weather upon all those involved in this year's National Salvation Army Week, May 11 to 17.

#### AGRICULTURAL TEMPORARY WORKERS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, every spring season brings many demands on the time of farmers and ranchers in my home State of Wyoming.

They are busy tending to their livestock, newly born calves and lambs,

and planting their crops. Many of them rely on the H-2A program to find seasonal and temporary skilled workers to assist them in their time-honored work.

This program is vital to Wyoming's agricultural industry. That is why I joined my friend Senator ENZI in asking the Department of Labor to extend the public comment period on its proposed rule changes to the program.

Many Wyoming employers have not had an opportunity to fully review the proposed changes. I recognize that improvement in the program is needed. We must improve its efficiency for both workers and employers.

Recently, there was a very thoughtful editorial which was printed in the Wyoming Livestock Roundup on April 12.

The editorial was written by Bryce Reece. Bryce is the executive vice-president of the Wyoming Woolgrowers Association and I believe he does a terrific job of summing up the feelings of all Wyoming farmers and ranchers.

I recommend it to my colleagues and ask that it be printed in the RECORD.

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

#### COMMENT QUICKLY ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

(By Bryce Reece)

Apparently frustrated with Congress and its lack of action regarding our immigration laws, the Bush administration has decided to reform some aspects of our system administratively.

On Feb. 13 the Department of Labor (DOL) issued a 47-page proposal to amend regulations regarding nonimmigrant workers employed in temporary or seasonal agricultural jobs. Contractual enforcement of nonimmigrant workers and employer responsibilities are also addressed. These proposed changes would supposedly "re-engineer" the process by which employers may obtain temporary labor certification from the DOL for use in petitioning the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to employ a nonimmigrant worker in H-2A (agricultural temporary worker) status.

Workers from outside the U.S. are not only vital to Wyoming and the nation's sheep industry, but are becoming increasingly important to all of Wyoming's livestock industry. As importantly, they are vital to all of U.S. agriculture. As the DOL noted in its proposal, "Data from the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS) . . . shows that in 2006, 19 percent of all agricultural workers were first-time U.S. farm workers." Among the new workers, 85 percent were foreign-born and 15 percent were U.S. citizens. A new worker is defined as anyone with less than a year's experience.

Legally bringing in workers from outside of the United States is a laborious, tedious, time-consuming and expensive proposition. This statement has become increasingly true since 9/11. Increased and heightened security has made the process a bureaucratic and administrative maze, one that many employers are on the verge of abandoning. Faced with the increased difficulty of compliance, smothering and draining regulations and a seemingly endless parade of federal bureaucrats throwing up roadblocks, it's hard for people in the countryside trying to run a business and do things right.