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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rabbi Stephen Baars, of Aish Hatorah, of North Bethesda, MD.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Words are more powerful than medicine, and more painful than daggers.

Words can give courage to soldiers or destroy careers, even lives.

There is a Jewish teaching, that a person is granted so many words in this world, and when he has used them up, so is his time on this good earth.

There is the right word.

Then there is the right word at the right time.

Then there is the right word and the courage to say it to the right people.

May the Almighty, Ruler of this world, fill our hearts and minds with the wisdom, truth, and courage to be able to choose the right words, at the right time, with the right person. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 22, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I listened intently to the prayer of the rabbi. I was really concerned during the first part of it because he said you only have so many words and then you are all through. But he went on to better explain that, which we surely appreciate, because we talk a lot around here. And if it is just words only, I think our life expectancy would not be very long. So we appreciate the Rabbi putting all the other conditions on it.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader time, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 2642, the supplemental appropriations bill. There will be 2 hours of debate prior to a series of up to four rollcall votes in relation to motions to concur in House amendments.

It is my understanding the 2-hour time is equally divided between the parties. Is that true?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, under the direction of Senator BYRD, Senator

MURRAY will allocate the time on this side. I would further tell all Senators, because of the procedural glitch we had with the farm bill, we have not totally worked out what we are going to do on the farm bill yet. I had a conversation with the Speaker. I have spoken to both Parliamentarians—the House and Senate Parliamentarians. I think what we are going to do, as the House has done—I think at this time it is our intention to override the veto of the President. He vetoed 14 of the 15 sections of the farm bill. Through a clerical error, section 3 was left out. As a result of that, section 3 will be sent to us from the House later today, having been passed, and we will see if we can pass that here later today. But we have a good legal precedent going back to a case, I understand, in 1892, when something like this happened before. It is totally constitutional to do what we are planning to do. So no one should be concerned about that.

Also, after we finish the work on the supplemental, we are going to go to, hopefully, the farm bill and the budget and complete all that.

As all Senators know, for a number of personal reasons, not the least of which is the wedding of Senator DAN INOUE on Saturday in Los Angeles, and his best man is Senator STEVENS, they are not going to be here tomorrow. So as a result of that and other things, we are going to do our very best to complete work on what we have today, and we should be able to do that.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Senate will resume consideration of the House message, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2642) entitled "An Act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes," with House amendments to Senate amendment.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the House amendment No. 2 to the Senate amendment to the bill with amendment No. 4803, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid amendment No. 4804 (to amendment No. 4803), in the nature of a substitute.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senate is now considering the supplemental bill, and on our side, the Senator from Maryland, Ms. MIKULSKI, will be our first speaker.

I yield her 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Good morning, Mr. President.

Today I take the floor as the chairperson of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science of the Appropriations Committee.

We bring to the Senate for its consideration an element within the domestic spending that I urge my colleagues to support. It provides critical funding to protect America from threats abroad and those threats here at home and to invest in America's future. There are those that meet compelling human needs right here in the United States of America. They also deal with the incompetency of the Bush administration to truly estimate the cost of the war.

Today I am asking for support because in protecting America this subcommittee adds funds to the FBI. We add \$313 million for the Department of Justice, for both the FBI and DEA and the work they need to do in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Once again, we have underestimated greatly the cost of this war. But we are not going to neglect our duty. This subcommittee provides \$23 million to the Drug Enforcement Agency to fight narcoterrorism in Afghanistan, to fight the poppy trade that funds terrorism. Although the cost was underestimated, we are going to make sure we are going to do our duty to put those DEA agents next to the Afghan leadership to fight this narcoterrorism.

Then, at the same time, we are going to have FBI agents in the war zone gathering intelligence on terrorists, dealing with IEDs and some of the forensic issues there, and we have provided money for them to be able to do this. Once again, they underestimated what it would take because there is very important work the FBI needs to do so our military is freed up in fighting the war. We fight the war against those who are trying to kill us with IEDs.

But while we are doing that, and we are trying to keep Afghanistan and Iraq safe, we added to this bill money for people here at home. What we did was we added \$50 million to the U.S. Marshals' funds to catch fugitive sex offenders who threaten the safety of our children and our communities—\$50 million more, which was authorized under the Adam Walsh legislation, the bill to be able to fund the Marshals Service to go after those sexual offenders for we know who they are, we know what they have done, and we know they are loose in our society. It is the Marshals Service that has both the authority and the know-how to do that. If we want to make the streets safe abroad, I certainly want to protect the children of the United States of America against these sexual predators.

Then, we also added, at the request of over 55 Senators, on a bipartisan basis, \$490 million for Byrne formula grants for State and local police. We know there is a spike in violent crime all over the United States of America. The best way to fight violent crime is to make sure our local law enforcement has the tools they need to do their job. Therefore, we want the streets of Boston and Baltimore and Tuscaloosa to be as safe as we are fighting to make the streets safe in Afghanistan.

We are also working to deal with disaster recovery. In some States there are fishery disasters, such as in the gulf region, in New England, and the Pacific Northwest with its salmon constraints. We have added money to deal with the fisheries disaster. We also added a particular item for Byrne grants for the gulf region to address and deal with violent crime.

We are trying to deal with the fact that our own American citizens are facing disasters that so adversely affect either public safety or their very livelihoods.

Then, last but not at all least, we clean up the administration's mess. The census is on the verge of a boondoggle. There has been a technical meltdown in their ability to do the census. The so-called handheld devices that were going to be used to do the census in a new and data-driven way have not worked out. Who knows? The Secretary of Commerce is investigating it. But I am telling you now, it is going to cost \$2 billion to fix it—\$2 billion as in "Barb," not \$2 million as in "Mikulski." So we are going to clean up the mess of the administration. In this supplemental, we put a downpayment of \$210 million so we meet our constitutional responsibility to do this. I regret that the incompetency—the failure to stand sentry on taking the census, when they had 10 years to get ready for it, is indeed frustrating.

Then we come to another issue on prisons. Because of the inadequate budget request from the President, we are facing a violent undercurrent in prisons and terrible understaffing. We add the money, though the administra-

tion would not request it through its OMB. But all of the people who work at Justice who deal with this say this is a dire emergency, not to protect the prison but to protect the prison workers from dealing with this.

Then, also, what we did add was money for science, particularly for the space program, because when Columbia went down, they took the money for return-to-flight from other agencies. This returns it so we can keep our NASA on track.

That is what the CJS Subcommittee did, and I think we have done a good job. We tried to act to meet the needs in fighting the global war against terrorism. We dealt with the incompetency of underestimating the cost to these agencies because of the war. We are dealing with the incompetencies of either poor budget requests or the census boondoggle.

I think we have done a good job. I am asking my colleagues to support this legislation because if you want to protect our streets—if we need to help our people with their own disasters, and meet our constitutional responsibilities—you want to vote for my part from my subcommittee.

The other part that is in this bill, which will come at a later time, is that for which in the full Appropriations markup I offered an amendment to extend current law on something called H-2B. That is a seasonal guest worker program that has helped coastal States with being able to hire people, as well as the hospitality industry.

My amendment was a very simple amendment. All it did was extend current law that expired September 30. There was no new law. We broke no new ground. We created no new legislative framework. We created no new rights or privileges. It did three things. It lifted—it essentially gave a waiver on the cap of 66,000 people who currently come in.

What does all this mean in plain English? It means we were doing three things: first, protecting American borders; second, protecting American jobs; and third, rewarding the people who go by the rules. We protected American borders because we had a system that worked. People came, they worked, they went back home. Second, it protected American jobs because it was seasonal employment in industries that, in my State, particularly in the seafood industry, keeps businesses going that have been around for over 100 years. Then it rewarded the good guys, those people who are American employers who want to go by the rules—did not want to hire illegal aliens. But now we are going to poke them in the eye. It also rewarded the Latinos who came from Mexico—and I met with the madras down in my own State who often come from the same villages every year and return home.

Well, my amendment extended law. I know that my colleague—there will be a colleague who will raise the point of order today, and my amendment will

go down because it is not germane. I just wish to say this: It might not be germane, but it is relevant. Maybe it is not technically germane, but it is relevant because we are doing legislation to deal with the supplemental on compelling needs that our people face. That is why I want to get the sexual predators off the street.

I asked for 3 additional minutes. I am about to lose thousands of jobs because of this point of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent for 3 more minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am not going to speak long.

The handwriting is on the wall, but the handwriting essentially says this: If you go by the rules, you are going to lose out.

The Senator has the right to offer his point of order, but I am just telling my colleagues this: We are losing this battle on the seasonal guest worker program, not because of law but because of ideology, both from the extreme right and because of the left. So when my amendment falls, it is not about Barbara Mikulski's amendment falling. When that amendment falls, we will hear thousands of jobs falling where we actually had an immigration program that worked and rewarded people who went by the rules. That is it.

So that is the way it is going to be today. I look forward to the votes. I wish to congratulate the Senator for the way she has organized this bill and Senator BYRD for the great job he did.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, but I am pretty worked up today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Maryland for her passion on behalf of all Americans but particularly those whom she represents in Maryland. She has done an amazing job, and I commend her for that. I hope all of our colleagues listened to her words about what is in this bill because it is extremely important.

This first amendment we will be voting on today—we are going to have some pretty important decisions when we vote shortly because the bill we are debating does more than provide billions of dollars to fund our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. What this amendment does is provide money for emergencies right here at home in America, including funding to respond to natural disasters and our weakened economy.

Now, as we debate this bill, we are facing a choice: Will we support the domestic funding to help keep our communities strong at home or are we going to simply ignore their needs as we send billions of dollars to Iraq and Afghanistan alone?

President Bush has made his position pretty clear. He said that the only emergencies worth funding in this bill are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said he is going to veto any legislation that includes one penny over his request of \$183.8 billion for the wars.

But people across this country are hurting. Workers are facing unemployment. Our veterans are having to fight their own Government for the services they earned, and communities from Maine to New Hampshire to my home State of Washington are struggling to recover from devastating storms.

The domestic funding in this amendment would keep jobs here at home, repair badly damaged roads, care for our veterans, and help our rural communities. I think the President's veto threat shows exactly how out of touch he is with the needs of our American people.

As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, one of the provisions in this bill that I am most concerned about is highway and bridge reconstruction. Now, it is not that President Bush isn't concerned about highway construction. This administration actually requested millions of dollars in emergency funding for highway construction in this bill. The problem is, I tell my colleagues, that President Bush's concern is for highways in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, those are the only requests for roads and bridge repairs by the President in this supplemental.

Meanwhile, the Federal Highway Administration is currently sitting on a backlog of applications totaling over half a billion dollars for roads and bridges that have been destroyed by natural disasters right here at home in America. They are still struggling in Louisiana to rebuild roads that were damaged during Hurricane Katrina and the heavy rains of 2006. Texas needs help to rebuild after Hurricane Rita and floods over the last 2 years. Large sections of roads in Maine and New Hampshire were destroyed in floods last spring. In Oregon and in my home State of Washington, we are still fighting to recover from devastating floods that were caused by storms of last December.

Let me give my colleagues an idea of what I am talking about. This photo shows us roadwork that is being done in Afghanistan. Now, in this supplemental appropriations bill, the President requested more than \$725 million for construction, repair, and restoration of roads and bridges in Iraq and Afghanistan. The money the President is requesting includes over \$300 million for the Commander's Emergency Response Program for road projects in Iraq and Afghanistan; \$50 million for Afghanistan's Bamiyan-Dowshi Road, as well as another \$275 million for other roads in Afghanistan. He is also asking for another \$100 million in military construction projects for road projects in Bagram, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. My concern is that the President wants to fund these roads overseas, and yet he is ignoring that 21 States right here are waiting—waiting—for emergency help with roads and bridges that are eligible for Federal aid—roads in Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Washington.

Let's be clear. We are not talking just about fixing potholes.

I ask unanimous consent to have a table which displays all of the States that are waiting for emergency relief printed in the RECORD.

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

EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM FUND REQUESTS, APRIL 30, 2008

State	Event	Formal requests	Pending requests	Subtotal by State
Alabama	AL05-3, August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina (add'l request)	2,300,000		2,300,000
Alaska	AK06-1, November 2005 Winter Storms (add'l request)	175,769		175,769
California	CA05-1, 2004-2005 Winter Storms (add'l request)	117,700,000		
	CA08-1, October 3, 2007 La Jolla Slide City of San Diego		20,000,000	
	CA08-2, October 12, 2007 1-5 Tunnel Fire	17,600,000		
	CA08-3, October 2007 Wildfires	28,700,000		
	CA08-4, Martins Ferry Bridge Disaster		10,000,000	194,000,000
Kansas	KS07-1, May 4, 2007 Tornado and Flooding	1,539,553		
	KS07-2, June 21, 2007 Storms and Flooding	4,430,769		5,970,322
Louisiana	LA05-1, August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina Indirect Costs	28,998,103	43,469,548	75,424,629
Maine	LA07-1, October 16-November 2, 2006 Heavy Rains and Flooding	2,956,978		185,000
Minnesota	ME07-1, April 15, 2007 Rains and Flooding (add'l request)	185,000		7,461,465
Missouri	MN07-2, August 2007 Flooding	7,461,465		
	MO07-1, May 2007 Flooding		1,783,500	
	MO08-1, November 27, 2007 Jefferson Street Bridge Fire	1,249,308		
	MO08-2, March 2008 Storms and Flooding		5,000,000	8,032,808
New Hampshire	NH07-1, April 2007 Flooding	3,929,229		3,929,229
New Jersey	NY07-1, April 14, 2007 Northeast		11,000,000	11,000,000
New York	NY06-1, June 2006 Flooding (add'l request)	1,437,989		
	NY06-2, October 12, 2006 Snowstorm	530,040		
	NY06-3, November 16, 2006 Heavy Rains and Flooding (add'l request)	323,773		
	NY07-1, April 14, 2007 Northeast	4,890,577		

EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM FUND REQUESTS, APRIL 30, 2008—Continued

State	Event	Formal requests	Pending requests	Subtotal by State
North Carolina	NY07—2 June 19, 2007 Flash Flooding	9,108,477		16,290,856
Oklahoma	NC06—2, November 22, 2006 Storm	2,379,372		2,379,372
	OK07—2 May 4–11, 2007 Flooding	2,352,482		
	OK07—3, May 24–June 10, 2007 Flooding	4,446,404		
	OK07—4, July 10, 2007 SH 82 Landslide	5,690,000		
	OK07—5 August 18, 2007 Tropical Storm Erin	6,188,889		
	OK08—1, December 8, 2007 Ice Storm	10,425,000		
	OK08—2 April 9, 2008 Storms	4,400,000		33,502,775
Oregon	OR08—1, December 2007 Rainfall and Flooding		10,000,000	10,000,000
Rhode Island	RI07—1, April 2007 Rainfall and Flooding (add'l request)	431,600		431,600
South Dakota	SD07—1, May 5, 2007 Flooding	592,638		592,638
Texas	TX05—1, September 23, 2005 Hurricane Rita (add'l request)	3,460,240		
	TX06—1, July 31, 2006 El Paso Flooding	15,831,845	16,864,081	52,987,149
	TX07—1, May–June 2007 Flooding		16,830,983	1,774,533
Vermont	VT07—1, July 9–11 2007 Severe Storms	1,774,533		1,774,533
Washington	WA07—1, November 2006 Flooding (add'l request)	11,080,000		
	WA08—1, December 2007 Rainfall and Flooding	44,800,000		55,880,000
West Virginia	WV07—1, April 2007 Heavy Rains and Flooding	1,494,611		1,494,611
Wisconsin	WI07—1, August 18, 2007 Rainfall	4,802,452		4,802,452
FLH Manag. Agencies	various events	11,494,066	2,800,000	14,294,066
Total		365,161,162	137,748,112	502,909,274
Excess funds from Northridge Earthquake (PL 103–211)				51,782,891
Net Unfunded Backlog				451,126,383

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in several of those 21 States that are waiting for funds, officially declared natural disasters wiped-out roads and bridges, completely creating obvious safety hazards but also cutting off some of our rural communities and disrupting families and commerce. Here is a picture that gives us an idea of the scope of the problem we face in my home State alone. Sections of roads such as this one in Gifford-Pinchot National Forest were completely destroyed in recent floods.

If the Federal Government doesn't provide help, these States are going to have to either wait to fix these roads or pay for these emergency repairs by diverting money from their annual highway funds and delaying or canceling critically needed projects. At a time when we know our economy is slipping and gas prices are at an all-time high, our States can't afford to do this. A State such as Oklahoma would have to spend almost 7 percent of its entire annual highway program to help repair roads that were destroyed during recently declared disasters.

Mr. President, 2007 was an unusually hard year for Oklahoma. The problems that were caused by storms last year were compounded by more storms this past April. As a result, the backlog of highway repairs now waiting for the Federal aid emergency relief program totals \$33.5 million. That money is contained in the amendment we will be voting on this morning.

So, as I said, my home State of Washington was hit by devastating floods last December. Communities from southwest Washington in Whatcom County on the Canadian border are struggling to recover, and they desperately need and deserve help from our Federal Government.

The bottom line is that while I understand the problems that inadequate roads pose to our military and the people in Iraq and Afghanistan, we also have urgent needs right here at home for the same kinds of repairs, and we have a responsibility to address those emergencies. The longer we wait, the

longer the list of roads waiting for repairs becomes. And those damaged roads hold up our commerce, they keep people from getting to work, and they keep goods from getting to market. That is going to continue to hurt our already strained economy.

Just yesterday, Governor Gregoire in my home State declared an emergency when a highway in Spokane was completely washed out in heavy rains and snowmelts. Our Transportation Department says those repairs will cost \$1 million, and it is going to take several days to reopen a single lane of that traffic.

When our citizens pay their taxes, they expect their money will go to keep the roads and bridges in their own communities safe and reliable. I think President Bush is profoundly out of touch if he believes our taxpayers would rather spend their money on new roads overseas than on damaged roads in their own communities.

So I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle pay close attention to what is in this emergency relief amendment and that they vote to take care of their own constituents at home while we continue to fund these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Mississippi is recognized.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, earlier this week I spoke about the need to act expeditiously to consider the supplemental appropriations bill to fund ongoing operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the global war on terrorism. I don't know that I could add any more persuasive reasons why we must approve the President's request for supplemental appropriations.

In a hearing earlier this week before our Appropriations subcommittee, Secretary of Defense Gates testified that the military personnel account that pays our soldiers and the operations and maintenance accounts which fund readiness, training, and the salaries of civilian employees across the Defense

Department will run dry over the next few weeks. Secretary Gates can forestall this depletion of funds for a short period of time, but if he does so, it will disrupt ongoing programs that are critical to our operations in theater and to our national defense generally.

Delay in providing funds for our troops has already disrupted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Admiral Mullin, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified before the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee also about a recent visit he had with soldiers on the front lines. Those soldiers told Admiral Mullin that they were unable to allocate additional funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program because essentially all the money had been allocated for the quarter. We are two-thirds of the way through the fiscal year, and yet Congress has provided less than one-third of the funds requested for this emergency response program.

Secretary Gates characterizes this initiative as:

The single most effective program to enable commanders to address local populations' needs and get potential insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan off the streets and into jobs.

I will not repeat my statement from earlier this week on the urgent need to move this process forward, but it is clear that when Congress finally began to act, it did so using convoluted procedures designed to shut out individual Members in the Senate and in the other body. Yet, this morning, it remains highly uncertain whether an adequate and signable supplemental funding bill will be sent to the President before Memorial Day. There are rumors—conversations—about a short-term, 1-month supplemental being drafted by the majority.

Mr. President, that is really not what we need. It is one thing to extend the aviation bill or the farm bill or other programs for short periods of time while Congress completes its work on long-term legislation, but to begin stringing out our military and our diplomatic corps on a month-by-month

basis during a period of military conflict is a dereliction of our duties.

I worry that the Congress is becoming an impediment to the efficiency and the capability of our Government, and to our Department of Defense in particular. We are not acting to protect the security of our troops who are putting themselves in harm's way and embarking on dangerous missions or providing for others whom we are trying to train to prepare to take over the responsibilities for national security. We need to get together now.

The time for dragging our feet is long past. We need to find a common ground so that we can provide our men and women in the field with the necessary resources and the support that is necessary to conduct successfully the mission assigned to them by our United States Government. We need to do this without any further delay. I urge my colleagues to do it now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of the supplemental bill that was put together by many Members, actually, on both sides of the aisle, who believe that, yes, we should expedite funding for our troops in the field, but also there are emergencies right here at home, as eloquently described earlier this morning in the remarks of the Senator from Maryland and the Senator from Washington State.

I would like to add some words to their arguments. First of all, I realize there is an emergency and a war and conflict going on in Iraq and international incidents around the world that deserve the attention and support of this body. But there are also emergencies right here at home and imminent and ongoing threats.

This chart basically says it all. It is a frightening chart to me, a depressing chart, but it is reality. The reality is, since 1955 through 2005, this is the track of hurricanes that have hit the United States. Some of these are category 1, some are category 2, but dozens of them are categories 4 and 5. This track is Hurricane Katrina in yellow and Hurricane Rita in blue, which devastated large parts of Louisiana and Mississippi, even going into Alabama and Texas—flooding thousands of homes and killing 2,000 people plus along the gulf coast. The predictions are that these kinds of storms are going to get more frequent and worse.

There is nothing we can do to prevent hurricanes. This is Mother Nature. We have just seen it explode in China and in Burma. It is frightening to a civilized society. We get in strong buildings like this and think that nothing can hurt us; surely no water could reach us or wind destroy us. Then Mother Nature appears in a very vio-

lent way sometimes and reminds us how vulnerable we all are.

In the United States, we just don't cry about these things and wring our hands. We do something. We, the States, local and Federal Governments appropriate funding to build the right kind of levees and dams, and we provide the right paradigm or framework for insurance because that is the way we protect ourselves. Hopefully, we have infrastructure that will not fail when the pressure comes; and then insurance, if it does come, to help people who have lost so much get back on their feet. That is all we can do. It would be good if we would do that.

But if we vote against this bill today, we are not taking the necessary steps to get that done. Again, this is a depressing chart to me. I don't like to see it, but I put this up in my office to remind myself that this is not just about Katrina and Rita, which we will be marking the anniversary of on August 29—3 years—and then September 24, 3 years for Rita, two of the most destructive storms to hit the United States. I remind myself that New York is in danger, New Jersey is in danger, and South Carolina and North Carolina are in danger. And Florida, in 2005, had the worst storm season of the century, according to the Senator from Florida.

Briefly, referring to this chart, this is the area that went underwater in New Orleans, this region—New Orleans and Jefferson and St. Bernard. Some say: Why don't you all just relocate? That would be a very expensive proposition, and impossible, for any number of reasons. One, about 1 million people live in the metropolitan area; two, the mouth of the Mississippi River is something that the people of Mississippi and Louisiana most certainly think is an important asset to the country—so important that Thomas Jefferson, when he was President, leveraged the entire Federal Treasury to purchase it. We put all of our defenses along the river to defend it. You cannot close this river. The people who work on the river and contribute to the assets of the country cannot go live in Arkansas or north Texas or north Mississippi. They need to live close to the coast for all of the important energy that comes.

The city is no longer underwater. The water is long gone, but the tears are still there and the pain is still there because the start of the hurricane season is just right around the corner, June 1. We have reports in the paper today that there is some leakage in the same canal that breached and destroyed over 10,000 homes—or more, actually—in the Lakeview area, which is a solid middle-class area.

This is a picture from the Times-Picayune today. In this bill, there is about \$7 billion for levees, to finish the construction of levees that broke—Federal levees that should have held and didn't. We are in a mad dash to get these levees and this infrastructure rebuilt strongly, correctly, and safely so peo-

ple can begin to rebuild this city higher, yes, and stronger, yes. But no one living in the middle of a city or urban area should have to go to bed at night and wonder when they wake up if they will be in 8 feet of water or 12 feet.

This is the 17th Street Canal, and you have seen this many times in pictures. That is what is in this bill. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on the supplemental.

I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I can only yield 30 more seconds. Other Senators wish to speak.

Ms. LANDRIEU. We have hurricane levees in this bill. We also have housing vouchers. The risks have increased substantially in the region. After the storm, we lost 250,000 dwellings in Louisiana and thousands in Mississippi. We have a homeless population that has doubled. There are housing vouchers in the bill for the homeless, for the very low income, and for the disabled. After storms like these, that population is gravely threatened.

I will come back later and finish my remarks. This is important to the people of the gulf coast. I thank the Senator for the time allowed this morning. I urge my colleagues, in supporting the war funding in Iraq, please let's remember the emergency still going on at home.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining Republican time be allocated as follows: Senator GRAHAM for up to 20 minutes to engage in a colloquy with Senators BURR, KYL, and CORNYN; Senator VITTER for 5 minutes; Senator BROWBACK for 5 minutes; and that the remainder of the time, if anything, be allocated by Senator McCONNELL, or his designee.

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

FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008—VETO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the President's veto message on H.R. 2419, which the clerk will read, and which will be spread in full upon the Journal.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message on H.R. 2419, a bill to provide for the continuation of Agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, so that there is no misunderstanding, I ask unanimous consent that the veto message on H.R. 2419, the Food Security Act, be considered as having been read, that it be printed in the RECORD, and spread in full upon the Journal, and held at the desk.

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

The President's message is as follows:

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2419, the "Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008."