

extenders bill. Republicans support the provisions being extended in this legislation. That is why I, along with several of my colleagues, introduced an even stronger version of the House bill, one that contains even longer extensions of the expired provisions, provides AMT relief excluded from the House bill, and does both in a form that would avoid a veto; that is, of course, without raising taxes.

The tax provisions in question are an enormous help to millions of Americans, and a long-term extension would provide the added comfort of predictability into the family budget and the small business balance sheet in the midst of a difficult economic time.

Republicans have been firm on this point, which is why I read with some amusement a letter which was sent to me on Friday by my friend the majority leader, extolling the virtues of the House bill. As I said, Republicans truly agree that the expired provisions certainly merit extension. This is not a State secret. Our point of departure, the principle we have insisted on, is this: Short-term tax extensions should not be the occasion for permanent tax increases. If a new tax policy is being created, that is one thing. But if current taxes are simply being extended, those extensions should not be accompanied by new tax increases. To do so would be to transform the annual ritual of extending current tax law into a stealth exercise in increasing the size of Government.

Unfortunately, the House Democratic leadership seems to have dug in, saying it will not pass an extenders bill without tax hikes. This brings us to an impasse for no good reason. First of all, it strikes me as odd that the House Democratic leadership would single out these particular tax extenders for a fight on offsets. They didn't need offsets on the stimulus bill earlier this year. AMT relief will apparently not require offsets this year. House leaders have signaled that a new GI benefits expansion would not require offsets. And just last week, the House passed an unemployment insurance expansion bill that did not have offsets.

It is entirely possible that the Democratic leadership is open to compromise. Recall that during last year's AMT debate, House leaders also insisted on offsets. On December 18, just last year, House Democrats were saying they would not consider AMT relief unless it included tax hikes elsewhere. Then the following day, September 19, they passed an AMT bill without tax hikes by a vote of 352 to 64. After all the press releases and letters had been issued, our friends on the other side sat down with Republicans and did something we should do a lot more of around here: they negotiated.

So notwithstanding the letter I received on Friday from my good friend, the majority leader, I am hopeful we can do the same thing on this tax extenders bill—sit down together and come up with a solution that is accept-

able to both sides and which actually has a chance of being signed into law. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when I finish my remarks Senator HARKIN and Senator GRASSLEY follow me.

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

MIDWEST FLOODING

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to offer my thoughts and prayers to the people and communities throughout the Midwest who were hurt by last week's massive floods.

It appears that the floodwaters have begun to recede. But the long, hard process of cleaning up and rebuilding lies ahead.

In particular, I offer sympathy and support to my colleagues TOM HARKIN and CHARLES GRASSLEY, the Senators from Iowa, whose governor has declared 83 of the State's 99 counties to be disaster areas.

Worst hit was the city of Cedar Rapids, IA.

Over 9 square miles—or 1,300 blocks—were flooded in the city and 25,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes. Preliminary estimates indicate over \$700 million in damage. This is in Cedar Rapids alone.

In Cedar Rapids, it is being called not the flood of the century—but the flood of the half-millennium—an event that should occur only once in 500 years.

In fact, rescue workers from Minnesota have been deployed to Iowa to help the victims of the flooding there.

While the residents and businesses of Cedar Rapids were hit the hardest, they were hardly alone. Heavy rainfall last week submerged much of the Midwest—Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and my own State of Minnesota.

Throughout the Midwest, corn and soybean fields turned into lakes. City streets turned into canals. It's like Waterworld. There is water nearly everywhere. And where there isn't water, there is mud. Lots of mud.

In terms of physical devastation, some are calling these floods "the Katrina of the Midwest."

Among the areas suffering flood damage was the southeastern corner of my state of Minnesota. Three major rivers in the area—the Root, the Cedar and the Zumbro—all flooded.

Four Minnesota counties were declared State disaster areas—Freeborn, Mower, Fillmore and Houston counties.

This includes areas that have already suffered extensive flood damage in the past year—both with the devastating floods in August last year as well as floods earlier this spring.

As you can see from this aerial photograph of Austin, MN, taken last week, flood, water poured across big sections of the city, flooding not just streets, but highways and freeway ramps.

This weekend, I spoke with the mayors of Austin, Rochester and Lanesboro. Later in the week, I plan to visit the area and meet with local leaders and residents. After the floods last August, I traveled to the area several times to survey the damage and work with local and State leaders to obtain Federal aid and assistance. My family and I even spent a weekend in the area.

I know these communities are strong—just as you will see with the State of Iowa, which State has been hit even harder, and they will make it through this latest disaster.

Last week's flooding resulted in the death of one Minnesota man, Dale Wangen, of rural Albert Lea. He was driving home in the dark, rainy night and suddenly his car plunged into the rushing flood waters because the road was washed away.

Emergency responders found him only because another car came along and also plunged into the water. That driver was able to get out. But he told rescuers that his car had crashed on top of another car.

Austin, MN, is home to Hormel Foods, a Fortune 500 company. They had to close their corporate offices because of the flood.

Here is a second photograph of Austin, also taken last week. You can see that it was not just a few wet basements. Some neighborhoods were flooded practically up to the treetops and had to be evacuated.

Fortunately, Austin was spared even worse damage because—ever since a major flood 30 years ago—they have been implementing a comprehensive flood mitigation plan, including the purchase of more than 250 homes in flood-prone areas.

Nonetheless, the three worst floods in Austin's history have all occurred since the year 2000—with the worst in 2004.

As one resident of Austin put it: "It seems like we're getting a 'hundred-year flood' every 3 or 4 years."

While the most attention is given to cities and towns damaged by the floods, the countryside has not been spared, either.

Houston County, at the far southeastern tip of Minnesota, is a rural area with a total population of just

20,000. Preliminary estimates indicate that Houston County alone has suffered close to \$7 million in infrastructure damage and \$15 million in crop damage.

Heavy spring rains had already delayed the planting of crops. Now, there are acres and acres of young corn and soybean plants that are under water. The work that Senator HARKIN has done as Chair of the Agriculture Committee is making sure that we give permanent disaster relief is so important. These floods are one example.

We will not know the full extent of the damage until the harvest this fall. But the end result could be billions of dollars in crop losses.

At a time like this, local communities should not be expected to fend for themselves. The Federal Government has an essential role to support communities as they recover and rebuild.

In these circumstances, the Federal Emergency Management Agency—FEMA—must be a lifeline to help these communities both survive and come back.

FEMA is the primary coordinator of all Federal responses to this national tragedy, from first making sure that people are safe and secure, to then making sure that those people are made whole again, to finally making sure that their infrastructure is rebuilt and made stronger, so that such disasters do not happen again. We saw this in flooding last year in Southeastern Minnesota, where whole communities were washed out. We went through these three steps so those communities are beginning to thrive again.

The Small Business Administration plays a key role in recovery activities, providing vital assistance to local businesses that have suffered economic losses.

While we did not need it, the floods provide justification for the first-ever permanent program of disaster assistance for farmers, which we just passed as part of our farm bill.

In my state of Minnesota, it has been a tough 2 years when it comes to disasters.

Last spring, we had the Ham Lake fire that burned 76,000 acres in northern Minnesota.

On August 1 last year, we had the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge in the heart of our Twin Cities metropolitan area, killing 13 people and injuring over one hundred.

Later in August, we had the devastating floods in southeastern Minnesota that cost six lives and caused tens of millions of dollars in damage.

Less than a month ago, on the Sunday evening before Memorial Day, the small community of Hugo was hit by a fierce tornado. It killed a 2-year-old boy, Nathaniel Prindle, and seriously injured his 4-year-old sister, Annika. Fifty homes were completely destroyed and another 250 were damaged.

But there is one special thing we have seen with each one of these disas-

ters. It is the sight of people joining together to help and care for others in need. Even with all the devastation, disasters like these still bring out the very best in the human spirit. Not just neighbors helping neighbors, but strangers helping strangers.

Disasters can take away lives; they can destroy homes; and they can wipe away roads and bridges. But, in America, we won't let them take away our spirit of community.

With the appropriate State and Federal support, I am confident that the flood-damaged communities of the Midwest will thrive once again. With leaders like Senator HARKIN and Senator GRASSLEY, I am confident Iowa will thrive once again.

I think about the epic flood that occurred 11 years ago on the Red River bordering Minnesota and North Dakota.

The waters inundated downtown Grand Forks in North Dakota and East Grand Forks in Minnesota—60,000 people had to evacuate; 900 lost their homes; and 11 downtown buildings were destroyed.

But with the hard work of Senators DORGAN and CONRAD and officials throughout North Dakota and Minnesota, it is amazing to visit those communities today and see how they have rebuilt and moved forward.

I hear that officials from Grand Forks have already reached out and talked with their counterparts in Cedar Rapids, IA—giving them advice on everything from legal issues to how to rebuild.

That, too, is the spirit of America. We know we will be able get through this disaster because we know we will work together and provide support to one another.

I see Senator HARKIN and Senator GRASSLEY are coming to the Senate floor. Again, we pledge from the State of Minnesota to do everything we can to help them. Their damage was so much more extensive than ours. But we know with fine leaders like these, they will help their State get through this. I know we are sending emergency workers from Minnesota at this very minute.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am proud to be here with Senator HARKIN. But I am not proud to be here because of the situation that we described to you, which is the flooding in our State of Iowa. I am going to show some pictures. Senator HARKIN has some pictures. I am not going to refer specifically to the pictures during my remarks, but I think you can see from the New York Times, downtown Cedar Rapids, IA—City Hall here on an island between the rivers, kind of in the citadel of Cedar Rapids, and water has never been that high before. This is truly a 100-year flood.

Then we have another picture here of Cedar Rapids. It happens to be on the

very same street on which Senator HARKIN has his office. My office in Cedar Rapids was in the Federal Building. The Federal Building is just across, right there. So it is shut down, obviously. I just want to make some remarks about the situation in Iowa and then turn the floor over to Senator HARKIN.

We come to the floor to share with our colleagues and the American people the stories of more natural disasters to hit Iowa. In my case, less than 2 weeks ago I came to this very spot to honor the victims and to hail the heroes from a deadly tornado that ripped through my home county, Butler County, IA. In a little more than a week, Mother Nature has ripped open a healing wound.

As many people can see on television, Iowans are seeing record floods throughout the central and eastern part of our State. I can tell you that television hardly does justice to this historic devastation. Iowa braced for a repeat of 1993, but it didn't happen. Instead, Iowans are facing head on a 500-year flood; more than 38,000 people have been evacuated from communities across eastern and central Iowa.

Rivers have overtaken several communities, and I cannot name all of the communities, but I think of Mason City, Waverly, New Hartford, Waterloo, and Cedar Falls. And then Mother Nature took her toll on Cedar Rapids, downstream from Waterloo and Cedar Falls, and hit Coralville and eventually Iowa City. In fact, that is two separate rivers doing this damaging situation. Des Moines and Columbus Junction and Vinton have seen the full power of the raging river as well. Unfortunately, there are more communities that have already seen the force of these waters and many more being hit downstream.

Like 2 weeks ago when tornadoes hit Butler County, Iowa has been the recipient of an outpouring of support from around the country. Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff in western Iowa with Governor Culver and FEMA Administrator Paulison were both in our State to tour the rising waters, and Administrator Paulison did that with Governor Culver, Senator HARKIN, and this Senator. It is my understanding that later on this week, President Bush will come to Iowa. And when it is all said and done, there are no better friends to these communities than their own local emergency management people, the local police and the local fire and the Iowa National Guard members. These people have been on the front line. They are analyzing each movement of water, watching bridges, water treatment plants, and ensuring the safety of every community member.

Most importantly, though, are those who are working together just to help a neighbor or a friend. Citizens by the thousands are filling sandbags, prisoners from local jails are helping with sandbagging efforts, and volunteers for the Salvation Army and the Red Cross

and most of the local churches—all of the local churches, I am sure—are seen throughout the flooded areas offering food, water, and shelter.

Senator HARKIN and I toured several communities Friday, as I indicated, with Administrator Paulison, the Small Business Administration, and Governor Culver, who is on the job every minute of the day. We did that on Friday. Of course, Governor Culver is doing it every day. On Saturday, Senator HARKIN and I surveyed other areas. On Friday, we happened to visit Des Moines, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, back to Des Moines. Looking down, you could hardly see a dry piece of land between any of those cities. Houses, businesses, and crops alike are all underwater. When I say crops are underwater, I have to say that in some areas, whole fields, but there is not a field we flew over that did not have some ponding and some loss of a part of it at least. So crops are definitely hurt. Then on Saturday, Senator HARKIN and I went to Mason City, Charles City, Nashua, and Waverly, and then I had an opportunity to go to my downtown of New Hartford, where all but 2 or 3 homes out of 250 had water in them. It is devastating. There is hurt everywhere. There is devastation that I never dreamt of. I suppose if we could remember 15 years back, Des Moines, yes, maybe. I ought to say that I never dreamt of it. I guess I never dreamt from that time that it would happen again to the extent it did in 1993.

We were encouraged as we traveled by the sandbaggers and their endless amount of resiliency to get the job done. But in the next moment, we felt the hurt of those staying in shelters who had lost everything. As you talked to them, they obviously showed sorrow through their tears and, of course, the effort of maybe a life of work gone down the drain. Yet, through it all, Iowans are coming together and pulling through as only Iowans can as the water begins to recede in part of the area we entered. But do not forget that in the days to come, downstream, as you move toward the Mississippi River, other people are going to go through what we saw. But as the water begins to recede, people are attempting to get back into their homes. It is obviously frustrating. It is obviously discouraging. Besides the home itself, probably meaning a lot more to other people are pictures of loved ones, ruined heirlooms handed down from grandparents that you see floating even on the second floor.

Just as we did in 1993, and more recently, the people of Parkersburg, New Hartford, Hazelton, and Dunkerton have moved forward and begun to rebuild. So will the people of the rest of the State of Iowa go forward to rebuild. It is going to take time. It is going to be weeks in some cases. In some cases, it is going to be years to rebuild and get back to where people were.

I am confident that we will get through this. Senator HARKIN and I are

here to help, as well as the Congressmen in the other body. We are meeting regularly to discuss what we can do at the Federal level. Our staffs are meeting and talking several times daily to coordinate work. I am confident that when it is over, we will see the resiliency of Iowans come through, and we will all look to each other and our rebuilt communities and say, as we said: It was sad at the time, but we can do it. I think we will say it has been a job well done.

Mr. President, before I yield the floor, I would be remiss if I did not pay deep respect to the four Boy Scouts who lost their lives and also to those who heroically and bravely helped others hurt during another act of Mother Nature in western Iowa on Thursday.

Funeral services are being held today for 14-year-old Aaron Eilerts of Eagle Grove, who was killed by a tornado at Little Sioux Scout Ranch. The other three were from Nebraska and I believe from Omaha. But whether you are from Omaha or Iowa, being a Boy Scout leader and having this tornado happen and losing the life of a future leader of America is a sadness, whether you are from Nebraska or Iowa. Boy Scouts are often called upon to serve as leaders of our Nation in all walks of life. We lost four promising leaders far too prematurely and painfully, adding to the already existing hurt many in Iowa are feeling.

Before I yield the floor, I thank Senator HARKIN for being able to work closely with him, being able to travel together and see this situation. I wish we did not have to be working together on this project because it is sad but one that makes you proud of Iowans as well. We will continue to work together to see our way through it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, first let me thank my senior colleague Senator GRASSLEY for his many kindnesses and for working and coordinating this as we did the other day. Our staffs are working very closely together to do everything we can to ensure that the recovery we have to do now is swift and thorough and that we do everything we can to assist the many volunteers in Iowa who have come forward to help.

We toured a lot together late last week. I am sure we will be doing more this week to make sure that we are up to speed, that we know what is happening, that we have a firm grip on the different agencies that have to come to Iowa for this tremendous cleanup effort.

I wanted to join with my colleague Senator GRASSLEY in giving a little bit of a report on the events unfolding in my State of Iowa. Senator GRASSLEY has covered them, but I might add of couple of things.

As he said, last week we toured a number of cities: Waterloo and Cedar Falls and Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Des Moines, Mason City, Charles City,

Nashua, Waverly—all places hard hit by this flood. I need not tell Senators—I know you have all watched it unfold on television, on CNN and everything else—as to the devastation in our State. Every newspaper is covering it on the front pages, whether it is the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune or Atlanta or wherever you are.

Iowa is experiencing flooding of almost Biblical proportions. Nine rivers are at flood stage, 83 of our 99 counties have been declared disaster areas by Governor Culver, and 54 roads and highways have been closed. Interstate 80, the major east-west thoroughfare of our Nation, is closed and has been since—well, I think since Friday, either Thursday or Friday. In Iowa, Interstate 80 is closed. Interstate 380, north-south, is closed, not to mention a lot of our smaller roads and highways in Iowa, making it very difficult for people to even get around.

As Senator GRASSLEY said, last Friday we were accompanied by FEMA Administrator Paulison and Governor Culver, OMB Director Nussle, a former Iowan. Mr. Paulison said the flooding was some of the worst to hit the United States since Hurricane Katrina slammed into the gulf coast. I would simply add that the cresting Cedar River raging through downtown Cedar Rapids is as bad as what Americans saw in Katrina in New Orleans in 2005.

You have to witness it with your own eyes to appreciate the breadth and the intensity of this devastation. It is very humbling when you meet with so many people who have been so affected by this, lost their homes, several lives lost. Thank God we kept it to a minimum—but losing all of their homes, things they have built all their life. Do you know what is really sad? Homes can be repaired. You can rebuild a house, you can do things again. It is so many of the personal effects people lost. Because they had to leave in such a hurry because of the rising waters, they were not able to take a lot of their personal effects: mementos, pictures, albums, birth certificates—all kinds of things like these that are the summation of your life, in many cases, gone, and those are irreplaceable. It is shocking, the devastation. Tens of thousands have been displaced, 25,000 people in Cedar Rapids alone.

This again, as Senator GRASSLEY pointed to one chart, is another view of the Cedar River here, Alliant Energy here. I will show you another picture shortly. The downtown area is over here. This is city hall. As you can see, it is totally inundated. Of course, power is off and everything. This is sort of the downtown area.

Then I think that I have one here—yes. This is a picture I took myself. I took this with a digital camera flying over it on Friday. That was city hall you saw in the previous picture. But you get some idea of the devastation of downtown. For example, the picture Senator GRASSLEY showed is right

down here. My Senate office is in this building here; of course, totally inaccessible, everything is shut down. So you can begin to get an idea of the magnitude of it.

Right over here is the Quaker Oats plant. I am sorry, I cut it off. This is the Quaker Oats plant. This is the largest grain milling facility in the world, and it is shut down, underwater.

Now you begin to see some of the other neighborhoods here and how they are impacted also. I wanted to see how many blocks it was. This is a typical part of Cedar Rapids that is flooded. You can see what a block would be like. You know, I cannot even tell the streets here, but I assume this would be a street, this would be a street, and this would be a street, so that would be a block. So you have about—maybe you have six or eight blocks here. There are 400 blocks like this that are underwater in Cedar Rapids—400. I did not have a camera big enough, did not have a lens big enough to cover it all, but 400 city blocks are inundated like that.

In Iowa City, much of the University of Iowa has been inundated. Students, faculty, staff—we were there watching them sandbag. Students were working, moving books from the library, artwork from the university's gallery.

Also, it is not just our largest cities. We talk about Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Des Moines, and Iowa City, but there are other smaller towns and communities we visited. Senator GRASSLEY and I were in Charles City and Waverly. Each have more than 500 homes inundated with floodwaters. We were told on Saturday one in every four residents of Waverly—one in every four residents—is affected by this situation, and their houses are flooded.

We went through the downtown area of Waverly on Saturday—not a business was open. Now, thankfully, the waters have receded because it is up north and the water is headed south. The waters have receded, but they do not have power yet. They have all the mud and the dirt and the debris to clean up.

Elkader had 60 homes and 30 businesses destroyed when the Turkey River went over the levee. The Anamosa sewage treatment plant failed at two different points because the levee broke. The list goes on and on.

I had to duck out for a minute when my colleague was talking, but Senator GRASSLEY's hometown of New Hartford—you feel so sorry for them. They were hit by this tornado a couple weeks ago, and a couple people lost their lives. It did not hit the town squarely, but it nicked it and took some houses out on the north side of town. But then New Hartford got flooded, and they had to evacuate the town because of the flood.

If you fly over Iowa—and, of course, being chairman of the Agriculture Committee and being associated with agriculture all my life, I wanted to

look and see—and you look over the countryside of Iowa, I do not know that I saw one field that was not affected with ponding and water. Because the corn had only come up maybe a couple of inches, the water has covered it and it is dead. It is gone.

So we do not know the extent of this damage, but the Iowa Farm Bureau estimates that as much as 16 percent of Iowa's 25 million acres are currently under water. Now, I have to tell you, just from my own eyeball, looking at it while flying over it over 2 days, I think it is higher than that.

Again I say, we see nature at its worst, but we see people at their best. With the sheer number of volunteers filling sandbags and helping out in other ways, thousands have participated. We were in Iowa City, and they were sandbagging up the library. You had little kids—9-, 10-year-old kids, maybe some younger—holding these plastic funnels so they could get the right amount of sand into the sandbags. Then they had these lines set up with students and everything.

I saw the same thing in Des Moines: sandbaggers sandbagging 24 hours a day. More people showed up than they could actually use to work.

There is no doubt, I am told by the mayor of Cedar Falls, Mayor Crews, that the effort of volunteers at Cedar Falls—that is right across the river from Waterloo—that the thousands of sandbags—tens of thousands—that were filled and reinforced the levee saved the downtown area of Cedar Falls.

So everywhere Senator GRASSLEY and I went last week, we witnessed Iowans giving their all to help their neighbors. I would be remiss if I did not mention the Iowa National Guard. Thank God for the Iowa National Guard. I am glad they are here. They have been deployed a lot in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it is nice to know they are home now. They were there to help. Over 2,500 members were mobilized. General Dardis, the head of our Iowa National Guard, has done a superb job.

Everywhere you go you see these National Guard people out there working. They are working, they are organizing, they are taking leadership positions. They are doing everything from filling sandbags to working the levees, helping people out of their homes, doing a magnificent job.

Again, I see these National Guard kids out there. I don't know when they ever sleep. It is like 24 hours a day they just keep going.

Well, I guess if there is any good news, it is that in Iowa City the water crested yesterday. But, again, when I talk about "over flood stage," usually when you talk about something being over flood stage, you are talking about it being a few inches over. Get this: In Cedar Rapids the old record was 20 feet set in 1929. On Friday, the river crested at 32 feet—almost 12 feet higher than any time ever. We never had this level

of flooding. This level of flooding has never happened in Cedar Rapids.

Across eastern Iowa, flooding rivers have washed out railroad lines. Mississippi barge traffic has come to a halt. It closed major roadways. As I said, Interstate 80 is still closed.

Thousands of Iowa businesses, large and small, have been impacted. John Deere had to evacuate two of its plants in Waterloo. I mentioned the Quaker Oats plant, as shown here on the map, in Cedar Rapids. It is the largest grain processing plant in the world. It was flooded and left idle.

In Cedar Rapids, 400 city blocks are submerged, as shown right there on the map. That is valued at close to \$750 million. Early estimates of damage to Iowa's agricultural economy, I can tell you right now, will exceed over \$1 billion. That is just agriculture.

Well, Iowans are a resilient and resourceful people. But, as with the gulf coast in the wake of Katrina, we are going to need generous Federal assistance to help us get back on our feet. The destruction is so vast that it is simply beyond the capacity of local governments and the Iowa State government to handle it by themselves.

Now, keep in mind, when we talk about the big cities, there are so many small towns and communities out there that have been hit hard that need help and jobs that need to be rebuilt. It is not just Iowa. We have Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, and Minnesota. They have all been hard hit by flooding and tornadoes.

I believe the hardest hit States will need to have the local matching funds for FEMA assistance, which is normally 25 percent, they are going to have to be reduced as much as possible. I hope we can work with the administrator and with President Bush to get that down as much as possible.

The Iowa delegation—on a bipartisan, bicameral basis—is preparing a letter right now asking the President for this relief. There is no conceivable way that a State with the devastation on the scale that Senator GRASSLEY and I witnessed this weekend can come up with a 25-percent match in order to trigger the customary FEMA assistance.

Now, beyond that, we are going to need to move quickly in addressing weaknesses in our flood control systems and some other mitigation needs so businesses and homes can be safely repaired.

The full 15 percent in FEMA disaster mitigation assistance, as authorized back in 1993, should be provided. It may very well make more sense for the State to buy homes that have been flooded so we can avoid having them flooded again in the future, with those repairs again paid for with Federal flood insurance and other Federal assistance. Such homes can be purchased and then permanently converted to parkland or other uses that will not need very costly repairs after future floods.

I might add, we had devastating floods in Iowa in 1993. We did some of this mitigation. Because some of those homes were removed—in fact, I think there is one town where basically the whole town was moved to higher ground. And guess what. They did not get flooded this time. A lot of times it makes good sense to do that.

We are going to need flexible community development block grant funding for infrastructure repair and home assistance. Economic Development Administration funds for infrastructure will be needed for businesses and jobs. Corps of Engineers funding will be needed for the repair and improvement of levees. We will also need Department of Agriculture support for a whole variety of agricultural things—from repairing conservation structures to meeting new soil conservation problems and cleaning up debris. Every culvert going under these roads, all over the State of Iowa, has been plugged up with some kind of debris. Bridges—all this stuff—need to be taken out and taken out in a hurry. So we are going to need the help of the Department of Agriculture on that.

So it will be several weeks, at least, before we can have an accurate measure of the total economic losses and physical destruction. Probably more time than that for areas south of the water. The water is all moving south, so I hate to say this, but I think northern Missouri is about to get hit pretty hard. And as to the absolute southeast of Iowa, we have not seen it hit the absolute southeast of Iowa yet.

So, again, we are going to have to get a pretty good handle on this, but this is a national disaster. It requires a national response.

So, Mr. President, I am sure Senator GRASSLEY and I will have more to report in the days ahead. But our thoughts and prayers are with the good people of Iowa and neighboring States who are still struggling with floodwaters or still picking up the pieces from devastating tornadoes.

Again, I want to join with Senator GRASSLEY in thanking so many church groups in Iowa. We saw them. Every place we went, we saw church groups getting together. Protestant, Catholic, evangelical—no matter who—they were all getting together and setting up response teams, doing an outstanding job. It was so wonderful to see these people come together and organize in that fashion.

Then, of course, in Cedar Rapids, some of the churches are underwater. I may not have one here on this map, but I had a picture earlier. I had some pictures of churches that were underwater too. But the church groups, religious groups in Iowa, have been wonderful.

On a really somber and sad note, I would, again, express my condolences to the families of the Boy Scouts who were killed at Little Sioux—a terrible tragedy—and to the families where some of the kids were hurt pretty

badly. Some of them are still in critical condition.

So we are praying for their recovery, their full recovery. But you listen to the stories that came out of that Boy Scout camp, and you see what a good thing Boy Scouts is and the leadership they provided and how they pulled together and helped one another. There is a lot of strong leadership in these Boy Scouts.

So we hope their families will take some condolence in the fact that these kids responded in a great leadership fashion. These young kids responded as adults after that tornado hit that Boy Scout camp.

Lastly, Mr. President, I deeply appreciate the many expressions of concern and caring expressed by our Senate colleagues. I have gotten a lot of phone calls and messages, and I thank all my colleagues for their expressions of concern and caring.

We will get through it. Obviously, we will get through it. I think Iowa will be a stronger State. We will have some tough times. I have no doubt about it. A lot of people out there do not have much money. A lot of times it is the lowest income people along the rivers and stuff because, well, the spacing—that is where the cheapest land is, isn't it? That is where the lowest cost houses are, for the most part. I am not saying all, but for the most part. I have seen some pretty beautiful homes inundated by water too, I might add, but a lot of these people are low-income people. They are elderly. They have nowhere to turn. As a caring nation, we have to help them put their lives together again.

So we will be on this every day. I am pleased to hear that President Bush—I just found this out a few minutes ago—will be coming to Iowa on Thursday. That will be good. I hope he can see this firsthand and then help us with getting those FEMA matching funds down as much as possible.

With that, again, I will be reporting more in the days ahead. But we are starting the clean-up process now from the most devastating flood I have ever seen in all my years in the State of Iowa.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MIDWEST FLOODING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this Father's Day weekend I celebrated by buying a dehumidifier. I live in the Midwest, and we have had a lot of rain, but I am lucky because my problems with a damp basement are minor—very

minor—in comparison to what people all across the Midwest are facing. We have seen this before. I was hoping and praying we wouldn't see it again for a long time, but our colleagues from Iowa and Minnesota and others have spoken on the floor about the devastation that is a result of massive flooding in the Midwest and Wisconsin as well.

Tens of thousands of our neighbors in the Midwest have suffered staggering losses and need help and our Government needs to be there, as promised. In my State of Illinois, the same floods that have devastated our northern neighbors are now heading our way. We are in a race against time and nature.

By Wednesday of this week, at least in the Quincy area of the Mississippi River, we expect the Mississippi River to reach its crest. It is the mightiest river in North America. It is a beautiful river and a big part of America's history but, boy, when the rains start falling and all those rivers start feeding into it, the Mississippi can become almost uncontrollable.

There are fears that the flooding along the Mississippi in Illinois could reach historic levels that we experienced during the great flood of 1993. I know all about that one. That was a flood on my watch. I was a Congressman in central Illinois, with a big swath of Illinois and the Mississippi River in my district.

It was one of the most costly and devastating natural disasters ever to hit our country. It didn't come with the intensity and immediacy of a Hurricane Katrina and certainly didn't cause the long-term devastation they felt in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Floods in our part of the world are a gradual, building thing that seem like they will never go away. More than 50 people died in 1993. Thousands were forced to evacuate their homes, as hundreds of levees failed up and down the Mississippi River. The economic damage exceeded \$15 billion.

The experts told us after that flood that it was a 500-year flood event. So we thought we would be able to brag about that for the rest of our lives, and generations to come will point back to 1993. Well, here we are 15 years later, and we seem to be on the verge of another similar disaster.

Many times, weather-related disasters, such as Katrina, give us no warning. They strike in a matter of minutes, hours or days if we are lucky. This is different. We have seen this crisis coming for quite a while.

Illinoisans are working hard and fast to try to prepare for the worst and to minimize the damage.

Last Friday, when the Senate adjourned, I went back to my home State and drove over to Quincy on the Central Illinois Expressway and met with Mayor John Spring and then went down to Grafton, IL, and met with Mayor Richard Mosby. Senator OBAMA was in Quincy on Saturday.

In those cities and towns up and down the Mississippi River, people are