

allowed to happen. If we are to buy assets, then what kind of system do we need to have in place to evaluate and oversee those assets? Are we creating more bureaucracy, more cost, for which, in the end, the taxpayers will suffer? Could we avoid that, while looking at loans—secure loans, of course, being preferable—but even in cases where there are not enough assets to secure the loans, moving forward from a loan perspective?

These are the kinds of questions I know those at the table right now need to answer. They need to answer them with a first and foremost principle that the taxpayers must be protected.

Finally, I wish to say that even as we move forward—as we have to move forward to provide stability to the American economic system—we must understand that this is not getting us out of the woods; that, in fact, those challenges to our economy are still there, including the threat of the recession, or the reality of the recession, and I think the economic numbers from this quarter will demonstrate that it is, in fact, where we are today. But greater danger lies ahead in our financial system, so the expenditure of Government resources now must be done in a way that keeps in mind that there are going to be some major issues that are going to have to be confronted in the near future. There may have to be some further action by this Government to provide stability in order to keep this country moving forward. Those considerations cannot be blocked out as we look at the crisis of the moment. We need to recognize that there are challenges that still await us.

The American people throughout our history have come together at every crisis that has threatened our national or economic security. We, in Congress, working closely with the administration, must protect their interests by working quickly, in a bipartisan way, to help secure a better, safer, and sounder tomorrow. Now is the time for statesmanship, not partisanship. Now is the time for leadership. Now is the time to come together to generate confidence in the American body politic and in the people that will then reflect confidence in our economic system, that will give the opportunity for a better and brighter future.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I understand that Members can come to the floor to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business. I ask unanimous consent to extend that to 15 minutes.

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

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, as people who have been following this debate know, the Senate is working into the weekend to try to finalize some very important pieces of legislation. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am disappointed in some way that we were not able to pass 13 individual appropriations bills, because that would be the normal course of business. Because so many of our States and counties depend on this Congress to get these bills done in a quick and efficient manner, it is disappointing to me as a member of the committee, despite how hard we have tried and despite the great efforts of our chairman, Senator BYRD, who has worked tirelessly to try to make that happen. It, unfortunately, does not look as though that is going to happen as we come to an end of this session.

What we are debating tonight is a continuing resolution that will keep the Government operating until, according to the date in the continuing resolution, I understand, March 6. Also through that continuing resolution we have attached to it the Defense appropriations bill, the Homeland Security appropriations bill, and the disaster package which I, along with many other Senators, worked very hard to shape as we witnessed and participated in—in terms of rescue, help, and support—several of the last few disasters, starting with Hurricane Fay that hit Florida but literally dropped feet of rain throughout many parts of the country, including Louisiana and other Southern States. Then, only a few weeks later, we witnessed and participated and tried to help as Hurricane Gustav—another category four, then three, and as it went inland a category two—a very powerful storm, delivered hurricane force winds through all of Louisiana—all 64 parishes. Even for a person such as myself, who is now sort of battle tested by hurricanes, it still is shocking that a hurricane could deliver such forceful winds all the way up to the northern boundary of a State that is over 400 miles. That is quite a storm. Then the winds were hardly down, and the electricity not even turned back on, and Hurricane Ike came roaring out of the gulf and hit Texas. Unfortunately for us, being on the east side of Texas, a great deal of damage was done as those very powerful winds and tidal surges again hit Louisiana.

So the people of my State, needless to say, are very weary and very tired and in great need of disaster assistance. So are the people of Texas. And let me say, I was pleased to be able to find time, even this week, to host a hearing in my subcommittee, along with my ranking member, Senator DOMENICI. We had four other Senators join us, for a total of six Senators, to listen to the very moving testimony of the mayor of Galveston, the mayor of Houston, the Lieutenant Governor from Louisiana, the Lieutenant Governor from Texas, and other key offi-

cials, as they came to this Congress seeking our help and our support to deal with an unprecedented number of disasters that have happened along the gulf coast.

I don't want to forget the floods that happened in the Midwest or the great fires out in California. It has been quite a year for disasters in the heartland, and I know this Congress has given a great deal of time and focused on Iraq and winning the war there. I understand we are focused, as I have urged, on more resources for Afghanistan. We have droughts and starvation and problems in other parts of the world, and we will do what we can to address that. But right here in the heartland, right here in our homeland, we have had many disasters that need our attention. So I was pleased, along with the other Members, Republicans and Democrats, to try to fashion a disaster relief bill that will actually make it to the President's desk so it can be signed. There was some debate earlier as to whether that should be attached to a stimulus, which was not passed today. That would have been a disaster in itself, because it would have gone down, as our stimulus package did. But I and others leaned on the leadership to have this disaster relief attached to something that was a must-pass, and I am very happy that was accomplished and attached to the continuing resolution because this resolution has to pass in some form or fashion prior to October 1, which is only a few days away, or of course the Government will shut down.

For the people of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Arkansas, my neighboring States, they breathed a sigh of relief that at least \$23 billion in this bill was headed their way. There was some \$2-plus-billion set aside for the Corps of Engineers, because levees broke everywhere. Luckily, the levees in New Orleans for Gustav and Ike held—barely held—but levees broke everywhere and thousands of people in urban areas, in suburban areas, in exurban areas, in rural areas, and farmers in the field are underwater. This is not enough, but at least it is something. I will come back to that.

We have \$6 billion for community development block grant disaster special aid. We laid this precedent down in 9/11, when this Congress rallied to New York's aid and sent a block grant of money. I believe that might have been the first time, in 2001, following that disaster, to help New York City stand up. And when Katrina hit and when Rita hit, we sent a similar block grant, although the money did not get divided according to damage and appropriately, but at least we got a block grant for disaster assistance. The Congress has decided again that the damage was so bad for Gustav and Ike to send another \$6.5 billion for these States to share. It is more than just the States of Texas and Louisiana. And that is the good news.

But the bad news is that the number alone requested by Texas, preliminary

number—and this is before the mayor of Galveston got one person back in her city, because they came back yesterday—these numbers were submitted last week, so these are very preliminary numbers that came from the State of Texas—was 6.5 by itself. There is only 6.5 in the bill. I am going to predict the numbers and the need for Texas is going to go up exponentially in the next few days. And of course, with the needs in Louisiana, in Iowa, in Missouri, in Arkansas, and in Mississippi, 6.5 is a start but there is going to need to be a great deal more assistance, particularly for the States of Texas, Louisiana, and some other States hard hit by these storms.

But this is a start, and we are going to make it work. And this money has some flexibility. We can use it for a variety of projects that are important—building non-Federal levees, perhaps some support to our farmers in our rural areas who are in great need. Then the bill goes on to provide some money for the Small Business Administration for disaster loans. We have streamlined that process. I am proud of the work I did in that area. Hopefully, this time it will work better.

There is some emergency highway relief money. I wish to show a picture of one of our highways, if we can get that. This is how our highways looked after hurricanes came through.

There is money for the social services block grant of \$600 million. We still, after asking for 4 years, have yet to receive, after Hurricane Katrina, any Federal funding to help the four hospitals that stayed open for that storm. There have been three since then, and these hospitals are using their own surpluses to take care of the injured and sick along the gulf coast. So we hope that included in this \$600 million for the whole country that we will find the money to reimburse those hospitals, which amounts to about \$100 million to \$150 million.

Then there is, luckily, \$75 million for fisheries. Because while these cameras focus a great deal on the buildings, as people are on their rooftops, and there are homes that are flooded and pictures of urban areas, what the cameras don't often catch, particularly in the gulf coast and particularly in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas—America's working coast, America's energy coast—is the hundreds of fishing boats, trawlers, commercial fishermen and sports fishermen whose boats, even though they try to protect them in these storms, end up as a pile of rubble, like matchsticks. And the Federal Government acts as if this is not a business. This is a multibillion dollar business. These fishermen deserve our help.

This is the picture of Highway 1. I am sorry it is a little grainy, but people would be shocked to know this is the highway that goes down to the very tip of Louisiana, with the gulf being out here. It is completely under water. This is not a minor highway. This is a

major energy highway—Highway 1—that runs from the tip of Louisiana all the way to Canada. So this is not a farm road. It is not a gravel road. This is a main U.S. highway that we have been trying to build in Louisiana for the last 20 years, trying to get a few dollars here and a few dollars there. Most of the offshore oil and gas that comes out of the gulf finds its way in and around this road.

I finally got Senator MURRAY to designate this as a Federal priority highway a couple of years ago, as the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee. We have been pushing money to this. If we had revenuesharing, this would have been built already, but that is another story.

But this is what south Louisiana looks like, and the fishermen need more help. This is Fort Fourchon. Again, this is a major oil and gas hub. When the tidal surge comes up—because we are not investing in the infrastructure—and when the refineries shut down and the oil rigs shut down, these are the conditions they are shutting down in.

To end this part, I hope I have demonstrated that while we are grateful for this \$23 billion, and we had unprecedented cooperation from the Governors of all of the States, Republicans and Democrats, and unprecedented cooperation putting this package together, this is only a downpayment on the disasters we have to face. So in the continuing resolution there is the DOD appropriations bill, the Homeland Security bill, Military Construction, and luckily we were able to get in a \$22 billion disaster relief bill.

But the reason I am on the floor tonight—and let me ask how much time I have remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. One minute.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent for 5 more minutes.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. The reason I am on the floor tonight is to call attention to the fact that despite this good help—and it is good help, and I am very appreciative—we have left out a very important segment of our population in disaster aid, and that is direct aid to our farmers.

This is a farmer from Louisiana, in Cheneyville, LA. He is standing in his rice field. You know, rice can be grown dry or in water, but too much of it is a problem. And if it has salt in it, that is a problem. The tidal surges that have come into Louisiana, and the floods, have been so great in central and north Louisiana, that even though some of our rice had been harvested, a great deal was in the fields when Gustav and Ike struck. So Fay came over the south and dumped a tremendous amount of rain just as southern agriculture was preparing for the harvest. Fay came in the early part of August, as we prepare for the harvest in September and October.

Mr. President, you most certainly, being a rancher yourself, can appreciate what goes on over the course of a year, where farmers work hard and hold their breath and say a lot of prayers. They roll up their sleeves and get up early and see that the crop looks good; that the weather has been great. They have corn in the field, cotton out there, and they have soybeans. And corn is at a great price. The prices are good for the first time in a long time. The farmers are thinking: Oh, my gosh, we are going to have a great year. We have had a couple of bad years lately. Well, all of a sudden, these storms come out of the gulf, and before you know it, they are barreling down on Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas again, dumping huge amounts of rain, flooding the fields, and at the worst possible time.

I wish to put up another picture of our farms from another part of our State. As the staff does that, I wish to read some of the damages, in terms of numbers. Whether it was rice or sugarcane or cotton or soybean, it has been a disaster. I will get to that in a moment.

Let me read to you Mr. Harwick's story. Mr. Harwick is a farmer from Newellton, LA. He produces 7,000 acres of cotton, corn, and grain. He is a very successful farmer. He is diversified. He uses the best risk management practices. He also produces wheat. He is Vice President of the National Cotton Council.

During Gustav, his family farm received more than 20 inches of rain. Mr. President, I know you are from Montana. I don't think you had 20 inches of rain in several years. So our problem in Louisiana is managing an abundance of water. I know in the West you all struggle with managing too little of it. Our problem is we drain two-thirds of the continental United States. So if it rains in Arkansas, it is not just a problem for Arkansas, it is a problem for Louisiana. When it rains in Missouri, that water eventually finds its way down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, so this has been a constant battle for our farmers for hundreds of years. Despite that, we have very productive farming.

This is what the cotton crop looked like on Jay Harwick's farm. The specialist from the University of Louisiana estimated that the cotton crop will be reduced by \$125 to \$137 million; anywhere from a \$52 to \$57 million decline in farm-gate value.

It is also estimated that more than 80,000 acres of cotton will not be harvested in Louisiana, and on the remaining acres, the yield losses will be dramatic. That is just cotton.

My time is running out tonight, but I will be back tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock, as we vote, and then speaking for most of the day and night on this subject. I do not most certainly have to take up anymore time tonight as I try to call attention to the tremendous devastation in the South and in other

parts of this country and the need for this Congress, before we leave, to do something more significant for agriculture and to do it in a way that provides direct assistance to farmers now.

I will conclude with this. The reason we cannot wait is the credit crunch is real and now. No. 2, there is nothing to wait for because the new farm program, the rules and regulations that we passed recently, will not even be finished being written, let alone to be able to receive applications for aid, until next year. That will be too late.

So for Jay Hardwick, the farmers I represent, the farmers in the South, I am going to stand here for quite a while and talk about their situation and say that, most certainly, if we can spend a few weeks trying to figure out how to save the financial markets and Wall Street, we can spend a little bit of time and a little bit of money trying to help farmers who did not take out subprime loans, who managed their risk well and got caught in circumstances well beyond their control that were not manmade but were of nature's making.

The facts of Wall Street and the financial crisis were not natural disasters. We all had a part in, I guess, making that happen. I am not here to point fingers or to blame anyone else. But for these farmers, this was not manmade. The men who grew these crops did everything they were supposed to do, their families did everything they were supposed to do, and the rains came. If we do not give them help, they will not make it until the spring.

I will be speaking about this for quite some time this weekend. We are grateful for the aid we received but there needs to be some changes before we leave, and I am going to do what I can to make that possible.

I yield the floor.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AMENDMENTS ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to mark the enactment of the Americans With Disabilities Act amendments Act, S. 3406. Passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support in the Senate and House of Representatives, this important bill was signed into law this week. I am proud and honored to celebrate the occasion with my colleagues, particularly Senator HARKIN and Senator HATCH, who worked so hard to craft the legislation and help guide it through Congress. The disability, civil rights, and business stakeholders behind this legislation deserve our recognition as well.

We are all part of a nation built on the promise of equal rights, justice, and opportunity for everyone. Eighteen years ago, we took a historic step toward fulfilling that promise with the passage of the original Americans with Disabilities Act. Unfortunately, we didn't expect then that Supreme Court decisions would narrow the law's scope contrary to congressional intent. As a

result, the lower courts have now gone so far as to rule that people with amputation, muscular dystrophy, epilepsy, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, and even intellectual disabilities are not disabled. The Supreme Court decisions further imposed an excessively strict and demanding standard to the definition of disability, although Congress intended the ADA to apply broadly to fulfill its purpose.

The ADA Amendments Act finally rights these wrongs. For one, the new law directs the courts toward a broader meaning and application of the ADA's definition of disability. More major life activities will also be included in the definition of disability, so that more people with disabilities will be covered by the ADA. The amendments further clarify that the ADA covers people who use "mitigating measures," such as medications or prosthetics, to treat their conditions or adapt to their disability. Otherwise, they will continue to be in a catch-22 that forces them to choose between managing their disabilities or staying protected from job discrimination. No one should have to make that choice.

Thanks to the newly enacted amendments, the ADA's focus can return to where it should be—the question of whether the discrimination occurred, not whether the person with a disability is eligible in the first place. Simply put, the ADA Amendments Act restores the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act to the civil rights law it was meant to be.

Mr. President, we cannot rest on our laurels as we look ahead to the future. Today we reaffirm the principle that discrimination based on disability doesn't belong in the workplace, but we cannot ignore the low employment rates for people with disabilities who want to work. They want to achieve to the best extent of their potential and enjoy economic self-sufficiency, but this piece of the American dream remains just beyond their reach. Clearly, there is still much work to be done if our Nation is to realize the ADA's vision of full inclusion and acceptance of all people.

So let us renew our commitment to the goals and ideals of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I look forward to continuing this effort on behalf of the American people, including all those in Nevada and throughout the country celebrating the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act.

110TH BIRTHDAY OF SEARCHLIGHT, NEVADA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of a very special event—the 110th birthday celebration of my hometown, Searchlight, NV. My colleagues have heard me speak often of Searchlight, and they all know how proud I am to call it home.

On July 20, 1898, Searchlight was established like many towns across the

West were—as a mining district. George Frederick Colton had struck gold the year before, bringing a rush of miners to the area. Over the next 10 years, Searchlight provided millions of dollars of gold to the world and grew to be one of the most populated areas in southern Nevada. During the mines' most prosperous years, Searchlight was one of the most modern, well-appointed towns in the State.

While Searchlight's mining boom may have ended 100 years ago, the pioneering spirit lives on in our small community. And on Saturday, October 4, 2008, the residents of Searchlight will commemorate the passing of the town's 110th year with a BBQ dinner and various activities. I join the community in thanking the Searchlight Museum Guild for organizing this celebration.

In particular, I would like to recognize my friend Jane Overy, curator of the Searchlight Historic Museum. Jane was instrumental in the founding of the museum, and she continues her work as Searchlight's resident historian in the planning of this year's birthday celebration program, "Sharing Searchlight's Historic Memories." In addition to her work with the museum, Jane is involved with many town activities and is a well-known and well-loved figure in our community. She is a Navy veteran and she and her husband Carl, an Air Force veteran, have been very active members of Nevada's proud military community. Jane currently serves as the Department Commander for Nevada Disabled American Veterans. She has been a dedicated collector and preserver of Searchlight's history, and I am grateful for her contributions to the community.

In my office in the Capitol, I keep a picture of my childhood home in Searchlight. It serves as a reminder of how my hometown has shaped my work on behalf of Nevada throughout my career in Congress. I am proud to recognize the historic occasion of Searchlight's 110th birthday, and I wish its residents a successful and enjoyable event.

TRIBUTE TO SENATORS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I wish to make a few comments about some of our departing colleagues who will no longer be with us next year. I have known some of them for just a little while, others I have known for a long time. And, to all of them I bid a fond farewell and mahalo for their service to their State and to this country. They are dear colleagues and friends of mine and I know that even if they leave this fine establishment, our friendships will continue long into the future.

The Senators that I am referring to are Senator JOHN WARNER from Virginia, Senator PETE DOMENICI from New Mexico, Senator LARRY CRAIG from Idaho, Senator CHUCK HAGEL from Nebraska, and Senator WAYNE ALLARD