

know, I predict that someday that man will become the Republican leader of the Senate.

I was a bit taken aback. I hadn't been here that long, but that is quite a prediction for someone to make.

Well, it has come true. It is almost as if the hand of Providence has directed it because here, in these final hours, these final days that my dear friend, Senator DOMENICI and I will serve in this institution, we will be a part of making a decision, a decision with regard to the future of America and our economy. It is a decision of a magnitude that I am not sure any other Senate has made in its 218-year history, save perhaps during the Civil War, a decision that this body will make affecting every single American—every single American.

I just say in concluding, the Senate, the country is fortunate to have you and others in the leadership role in this institution today, on both sides of the aisle, to guide us through to make that decision. That comes from my heart.

Good luck, God bless you, bless the leadership of the Senate and every Member of this institution as we assemble within the coming days, each of us in our seat, to cast this most important vote.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

SENATOR PETE DOMENICI

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, if I may, to Senator DOMENICI, with whom I have worked on the Energy Committee since I came to the Senate, I want to give him my accolades and also to wish him well in his days ahead. When I arrived in the Senate some 3½ years ago, he was one of the people who welcomed me here. He welcomed me here as the man from the land of enchantment, la Tierra Encantada, as we say in Spanish in New Mexico. He did so in large part because many of my family members are from the State of New Mexico. My family helped found the city of Santa Fe, the city of Holy Faith, now over 400 years ago.

During many times as I was growing up as a young man, and later on in my professional life, traveling in New Mexico, I would hear about the great Senator of New Mexico, the great PETE DOMENICI. Now, for the last 4 years it has been a tremendous privilege and personal honor for me to be able to serve with him.

I want to make two comments about him—first, in terms of the substance of the legislation that we have worked on together. We have passed three significant pieces of bipartisan energy legislation with him—in 2005, the Energy Policy Act of that year; again, we passed another energy package in 2006; and again in 2007. In the passage of those major pieces of legislation, it was Senator DOMENICI, working closely with his good friend, Senator BINGAMAN, who said that we could agree on

things for the future of this country on this signature issue that is so important to our national security and to our economic prosperity. He brought us together to make sure that we would work on those things that we all agreed upon. That is why we were able to pass those very important pieces of legislation. I very much appreciate what he has done in that committee.

Second, as he and I have talked many times over the last several years, there are issues that are unique to the West, the issues of public lands, where much of our lands—for example, in my State of Colorado, 33 percent is owned by the Federal Government. It takes an understanding of those realities, of issues like payment in lieu of taxes, or how we deal with the mining law in the West, or how we make sure that the water issues of the West are protected, and how we recognize the compacts of our States as being important. For all those issues he has been a tremendous leader and an inspiration.

I will miss him dearly as a friend. He has been a dear friend. But I also will miss his leadership because on so many issues he has worked across the aisle. I appreciate his leadership as well in what he has done for mental health parity for the United States of America.

There will be not hundreds of thousands, not millions, but hundreds of millions of Americans who will come to benefit from his leadership on the mental health parity issue. Also, the building blocks he has laid for us to try to take the moon shot that will get us energy independence. Those building blocks will remain in place for decades and for generations to come.

So I appreciate his leadership, and I appreciate his service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I want to thank my good friend, Senator SALAZAR, from the State of Colorado. I don't know what brought us together on our Energy Committee. Maybe it was a little bit of common language—we both spoke a little Spanish to each other, and it made us both understand and feel like we were friends. But we became that, we became friends rather quickly in his short 4 years.

I obviously remember your very first 6 months when we became friends and worked on many issues. I compliment you on your constant effort to work in a bipartisan way on issues. It is tough around here. It is going to have to move in that direction or we are going to continue to have trouble getting things done. For that, I hope you will stand your ground and at least keep trying.

I appreciate the kind words you said in my behalf. Let's hope we see each other frequently, if not in your State, in New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment.

Thank you very much, Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, these are one of the periods of our lives in the Senate we shall always remember. My good friend, the Senator from New Mexico, steps down and departs the floor. But you will be a Member of this decisionmaking body through the next few days, which will be critical when your vast experience will be brought to bear on this decision, as it will.

Mr. DOMENICI. Senator, I tell you, I said a little bit in my remarks a while ago about it. I get very excited and anxious because it takes too long. But that is the deliberative body. But we don't have a long time to give the Secretary of the Treasury the kind of authority he needs to fix a broken train.

We have had a wreck—lots of wrecks. All the freeways are clogged. We have to take away the things that are clogging them. We could look at it as a freeway with cracked-up cars, but actually the assets that are piled up there are the toxic assets that have been accumulated by those banks. If you don't get them out of the way, the line continues growing because of the broken-down cars, the toxic assets. The running cars can run no more. They are stopped in place. They contain everything that has given us a decent life in America.

We have to fix that. I am going to be here. Let's hope our negotiators will put something together that the executive branch tells us will work and that the world accepts it with confidence. When we come off this floor, when we vote that in—whatever it is, Monday or whatever—we will join, you and I, with great confidence that we have once again done something important.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I was present today in our group of Senators. When you spoke, you inspired them. We have got to rebuild the confidence in America. That is what underlies this decision. I also wish to say a few words about our dear friend from Colorado. I cannot altogether make these remarks without divulging I have a bias. I have visited that beautiful State many times. But my daughter makes her home there, together with my grandson, and the Senator from Colorado allowed my grandson to be an intern in his office. He served as an intern briefly in my office, both without pay to the taxpayers, I hasten to say, when I make these remarks.

But he has been a great friend. We have worked together on many things. He has dignity. But above all it is his enthusiasm and love for this institution. There is not a day when he walks on this floor, either to say to other Senators or to say it quietly to himself: How fortunate I am to be a Senator, to come here to represent the people of Colorado, to represent the people, as each Senator does, of the whole of the United States.

So as I step down, and others, we do so with a sense of confidence, behind us remain individuals like yourself and indeed the distinguished Presiding Officer who for 30 years, he and I have

served together on the Armed Services Committee. He will remain on. The Senate will be in good hands with you and our other colleagues to carry on and solve the problems for this great Nation and indeed much of the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

SENATOR JOHN WARNER

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I want to make a few comments about my good friend, Senator JOHN WARNER from Virginia. When you first come to this body, you get to know people. Soon I got to know him as a Senator's Senator, because he was one of those people who was always trying to bring people together and take on the major issues that confront our country.

I had the distinct honor of traveling to Iraq and other countries with him and with the distinguished Presiding Officer. I admired the relationship between Senator LEVIN and Senator WARNER as a template for how things should run in Washington, DC as we represent the 325 million people of America. There are two people from two different parties who work together to make sure that what we were doing was the very best job that we could to protect America.

So you are, both the Presiding Officer as well as Senator WARNER, two of my most significant role models in this Chamber. I admire you both for your service.

The Senator from Virginia was a member of pulling together the Gang of 14. It was now some 2 years ago when we were debating whether there would be a "nuclear option" and whether we would move forward in saving some of the procedures and the very functioning of the institution of the Senate. I remember working in awe with him as he and Senator BYRD and others worked on that historic document at that time, and on so many other occasions where he has been the person who has been the glue to bring people together. So he is a Senator's Senator, because he is such a proud American and such a wonderful leader for Virginia and for the Senate.

But he also is a wonderful Senator because he has a very unique ability of bringing people together. I would hope that all of us, the 100 Members of this Chamber, always continue to look to him for the kind of inspiration and great example he has been.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

HELP FOR RURAL AMERICA

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I intend to speak for these next few minutes, and then perhaps at least once or twice more as the day goes on. As you know, yesterday, because of my initial insistence on a potential rollcall vote that would require the Senate to come back, we were able to at least secure the introduction, at least the introduction of a bipartisan bill cosponsored by several leaders on the Republican side in agriculture and several leaders on our side on agriculture.

We voted to extend our Government operations until March. And attached to that continuing resolution were four very important bills to this country—Homeland Security, Defense appropriations, Homeland Security appropriations, in which I had a hand, as all of us did, in crafting. It has a disaster aid package, very specific, not a stimulus, not a spending bill, but a disaster aid package of \$22 billion that was passed.

The aid package is going to be a great help for the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, particularly, that were hit so hard by these last storms. That is Congress's responsibility, not to do it all, but to step up in times of disaster and help States and cities and counties through these major disasters.

I am starting to feel as if I am an expert on disasters, not something I want to be or that I am happy to be, because there is nothing happy about people losing their life savings, the only home they have ever lived in, having to use up all of their savings that they had for their retirement or their grandchildren or children's college education, to try to keep their home together after everything they have ever known is gone.

I have, unfortunately, in my short career here in the Senate, had to be witness to too many of these kinds of disasters in the State I represent. This Congress, particularly, I have to say, the Democratic Congress, has been very generous to help the people of Louisiana and Mississippi. I have been joined at times by Republican leaders who have understood what we are going through.

But a few hours ago we passed a bill with some objections, and mine was one, that said there was a glaring omission in all of these bills. It looks as though unless something is done in the next few days this Congress may leave here with \$700 billion for Wall Street and zero for farmers.

I represent large cities such as New Orleans, my hometown, and large parishes such as Jefferson Parish, in my neighboring city; cities such as our capital city, which is now the largest city in Louisiana because of the damage done to New Orleans by Katrina.

But I also represent rural communities such as Delhi and Rayville, and Cheneyville, and Dry Prong, and other places in between that have suffered

tremendously, not just from the levee breaches but from the hurricanes and the rain from Fay that hit Florida, but dumped inches of rain on our State, Ike and Gustav.

I have spent a good bit of the morning, and I wish to spend now, reading into the RECORD the real description of this disaster and continue to ask in public places such as this, on the floor of the Senate, for the leaders to come together and do something before we leave.

As I speak, the delegation from Louisiana on the House side is gaining signatures from the legislators in Mississippi, the Congressmen from Mississippi, Texas, and Arkansas to join this effort, and agriculture commissioners around the State, around the country, led by Mike Strain, our commissioner, interestingly enough, who is a Republican, I am a Democrat. This is not a partisan issue, this is an issue of fairness and justice, to try to help get our farmers some help before we send a \$700 billion package or \$350 billion package or \$100 billion package, whether it is in one tranche or three tranches or seven tranches, could there possibly be a tranche for middle America, and particularly for our farmers and our rural communities?

I wish to read a portion of a beautifully written statement that was delivered before my subcommittee earlier this week as we scrambled to get our information and our data together. It is not as though we were dillydallying or waiting to the last minute.

These storms, both Ike and Gustav, happened within the month. Ike happened 2 weeks ago. The people of Galveston literally were allowed back in the city I think 3 days ago to basically look, cry, and leave. I have witnessed this before as people came back to look, cry, and leave, all throughout the coast of Mississippi and Louisiana.

Well, my heart goes out to Galveston and to Houston. I committed to their leaders and to all of them, I will do everything I can in the time here to help them.

In the midst of all this, focused on levees and breakwaters and rising tides, what the Congress has forgotten is that rains accompany a lot of these storms. The rains fell and fell and fell and devastated parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Of course, earlier in the year, we had the great floods in the Midwest. Of course, even earlier in the year, we had the great fires in California. I am not here saying woe is us, we are the only ones who ever have disasters. What I am saying is, this Congress should not leave trying to bail out Wall Street and leave farmers holding soggy rice or sugarcane or rotten sweet potatoes or cotton in their hands that cannot be harvested. People are scratching their heads, asking me: Does anybody know we are out here? Does anybody care?

I was privileged to have Wallace Ellender IV testify before our Agriculture Committee this week. The interesting historical note is that his