

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

grandfather was actually the chair of the Agriculture Committee. We had the hearing in the same room that his grandfather chaired, Senator Ellender from Louisiana, a great Senator and a man I knew as a child. He chaired the Agriculture Committee.

I would like to read into the RECORD a portion of this testimony because I thought it was beautifully written and so appropriate for the time. Wallace Ellender writes not only as a sugarcane farmer himself but as chairman of the National Legislative Committee of the American Sugar Cane League.

He writes:

My brother and I are fifth-generation farmers who grow sugarcane on two farms in the Raceland and Bourg communities in southeast Louisiana, including the land that my ancestors settled in 1853. As a child, I remember my grandfather telling me a story about a stubborn dog that he had when he was a kid on our farm. On one occasion, the family loaded up everyone but the dog in a sailboat and sailed down the bayou to the Gulf. That dog trotted down the bayou behind the boat all the way down to the Gulf at Timballier Island. Other than fording a couple of small streams, he went all the way on foot. Today, that dog would have to swim 30 miles to reach timballier Island.

Where Timballier Island is, is washing away at an alarming rate. This is the coast of Louisiana. Timballier Island would be right down in this section. I wish to repeat:

That dog trotted down the bayou behind the boat all the way to Timballier Island. Other than fording a couple of small streams, he went all the way on foot. Today that dog would have to swim 30 miles to get to the island.

As I have said time and time again, if this Congress does not do more—and this administration—to send urgent and direct help through revenue sharing and some special disaster relief, there will not be any farms in south Louisiana left.

He continues:

Gone are some of the barrier islands and most of the wetlands that served as a natural buffer from the worst of the storms that came in from the Gulf of Mexico. We are losing coastal wetlands at a rate of 40 square miles each year. Some experts predict that the shoreline will move inland over 30 miles in the next 30 years.

I hope this gives you some perspective of the breadth of the long-term problem our communities are facing when we look to the south. I don't have to tell anyone who owns a TV or computer about winds that demolish houses and flatten forests and fields, or floods that overwhelm levees and shove aside homes, but the ominous power of the sea when it surges 20-30 miles inland is something to behold. What the sea leaves behind when it retreats can be bad, but what it leaves behind when it stays in the fields is worse. Once breached, levees that held back the tide will hold back the ebbing waters. We tear holes in the levees when necessary to allow the sea to retreat, but sea surges of the magnitude of Rita in 2005 and Ike in 2008 flow over the levees and push vast volumes of seawater to the lowest elevations in the fields. When the tides turn, the storm-ravaged cane fields become salt lakes.

But sugarcane is a hearty plant and, with good weather and time, the cane can rebound and produce a decent crop. Harvesting it will

be more difficult, and costly, but we can still hope for a mild autumn and a good price to help offset some of the additional costs we will incur in harvesting a bent and broken crop. On the other hand, we may not have much time to finish planting and harvesting before winter frosts and freeze become a concern. Further complicating the matter, sugarcane is a perennial crop and time will be needed to determine whether fields holding surge water for extended periods will recover next year.

He goes on to say:

According to Dr. Calvin Viator and his team of agricultural consultants, the worst of the wind damage to sugarcane from Gustav occurred in Terrebonne Parish, Assumption Parish, and parts of Lafourche, Ascension, Iberville, West Baton Rouge and Point Coupee Parishes.

All these parishes are here, and this represents about 2 million people in the southern part of the State.

He says:

The northeastern corner of the eye of the hurricane caused the worst stalk breakage, but this damage occurred virtually everywhere in the cane belt.

He writes:

Hurricane Ike's eye stayed to our south as it moved in on Texas, but this meant that the counter-clockwise winds drove the sea surge deep into Louisiana's cane belt in a manner eerily familiar to those of us who experienced Hurricane Rita in 2005.

I wish to stop here and say it is hard to describe the magnitude of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the largest natural disasters in the history of the United States, flooding more than the land of Great Britain, causing economic damage, up to \$150 to \$200 billion by estimates from conservatives to liberals, estimates from some of the greatest economic think tanks in the country. But all of that aside, to have that happen 3 years ago and then have other storms, Gustav and Ike, hit the same region again is more than I can possibly describe.

He goes on to describe the destruction that is occurring right now. This is one of our most successful farmers. This farmer is a wealthy farmer. Whether he and his family will be able to make it, I don't know, but whether you are a wealthy farmer or a middle-income farmer or barely scraping by, the Government has an obligation to respond to disasters that are not of your making. Our leaders have been meeting nonstop for 2 weeks, 3 weeks, and longer in other meetings, trying to figure out a way to handle a disaster that was of our making. These farmers in Louisiana and Mississippi and Arkansas and throughout the country had no hand in this. It was a natural disaster. Yet we have to put up \$700 billion for a bailout for Wall Street and the financial markets, and we can't seem to find \$1 billion to help families.

I will submit this letter for the RECORD, but I will close with this statement. I know some people listening to me might say: Senator LANDRIEU, every time we see you, you are asking for help. Every time we hear you, you are saying some other group needs help.

I wish to read, on behalf of sugarcane farmers, this sentence:

For the record, Louisiana sugarcane growers have received agricultural disaster assistance [just] twice in 200 years of production.

I wish to repeat that. We have received, for all the work that has been done, disaster assistance twice in 200 years. Can I say, as their Senator, I don't think that is too much to ask once every hundred years. Some people come to this floor and can't wait until the ink is dry on the tax bill before they come and ask for another loophole, another deduction. They can't wait to take their taxes offshore so they don't have to pay anything. Our farmers in Louisiana have gotten disaster assistance twice in 200 years. I am here asking for them a third time, and I don't think that is too much. They have nowhere to go. They are literally between the sea and disaster. That is the sugarcane farmers in south Louisiana and in north Louisiana.

I wish to put up a picture of the cotton crop and what it looks like because it is up north. I wish to submit for the RECORD part of the beautiful testimony written by Jay Hardwick.

I understand I have how much more time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. This is beautiful testimony by Jay Hardwick, who is vice chairman of the National Cotton Council. Jay is from Newellton, LA, a small town up north. He is also director of the peanut board, past president of the cotton producers, a man who works hard and knows his business well. He farms 7,300 acres of cotton, corn, grain, peanuts, soybean, and wheat. He is diversified.

He says:

Our producing mission is to achieve a viable and profitable farm enterprise while providing a balance between habitat and production resources with a minimum impact upon the farm ecosystem. Emphasis is placed on conservation crop production methods including no-till, crop rotation, residue maintenance, erosion control and precision technologies to apply and reduce pesticides and nutrient resources to help restore and improve water, air, soil, wildlife habitat. . . .

He continues:

Plentiful fish, deer, turkey, neotropical birds, migratory waterfowl, turtles, alligators, black bears, and increased sightings of eagles and various cat family members inhabit the property.

Our farmers are getting so smart and so good, and they have so much respect from me, trying to use so many techniques to not just produce the healthiest food and fiber in the Nation but to do it in an economical and environmentally safe way. They were environmentalists before the term was made cool in Washington. The farmers in America were the first environmentalists and always will be. They continue

to apply techniques to minimize damage.

If the people on Wall Street took as much care in their business to minimize damage as farmers in America do every day before 9 o'clock in the morning, we would not be here this weekend. For this Congress to leave without doing anything is a gross violation of our responsibility. This is what the cotton crop looks like, not because there was some "fancy dancy" paper taken out and it just turned it bad.

A hurricane came through and rains fell and the farmers could not get it out of the fields fast enough.

I see the leader. I thank the Senate, at least some Members, for stepping up this morning—THAD COCHRAN and others—to sign on to a bill that might provide some relief to the farmers, not only in Louisiana but Texas and Mississippi, Alabama, and throughout. I will continue to speak about this as time allows and continue to push the leaders on both sides to come up with something that we can do before we leave.

Mr. REID. Don't forget Arkansas.

Ms. LANDRIEU. And Arkansas.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD the testimonies to which I referred.

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

My name is Wallace Ellender IV, a Louisiana sugarcane farmer and Chairman of the National Legislative Committee of the American Sugar Cane League. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about the effectiveness of agricultural disaster assistance. I speak as a farmer whose crop was twisted and flattened by Gustav, then swamped in seawater by Ike. A representative group of photos is attached to my written testimony. I took some of those photos myself, three days after Ike came through. Other photos came from the Franklin area and the same scenes could be found all along Highway 90, the road you'll see in one of the aerial photos. Highway 90 is the east-west evacuation route and it runs approximately 10 miles north of the Coast.

My brother and I are fifth-generation farmers who grow sugarcane on two farms in the Raceland and Bourg communities in southeast Louisiana, including the land that my ancestors settled in 1853. As a child, I remember my grandfather telling me a story about a stubborn dog that he had when he was a kid on our farm. On one occasion, the family loaded up everyone but the dog in a sailboat and sailed down the bayou to the Gulf. That dog trotted down the bayou behind the boat all the way down to the Gulf at Timballier Island. Other than fording a couple of small streams, he went all the way on foot. Today, that dog would have to swim 30 miles to reach Timballier Island.

Gone are some of the barrier islands and most of the wetlands that served as a natural buffer from the worst of the storms that came in from the Gulf of Mexico. We are losing coastal wetlands at a rate of 40 square miles each year. Some experts predict that the shoreline will move inland over 30 miles in the next 30 years.

I hope this gives you some perspective of the breadth of the long-term problem our communities are facing when we look to the south. I don't have to tell anyone who owns a TV or computer about winds that demolish

houses and flatten forests and fields, or floods that overwhelm levees and shove aside homes, but the ominous power of the sea when it surges 20-30 miles inland is something to behold. What the sea leaves behind when it retreats can be bad, but what it leaves behind when it stays in the fields is worse. Once breached, levees that held back the tide will hold back the ebbing waters. We tear holes in the levees when necessary to allow the sea to retreat, but sea surges of the magnitude of Rita in 2005 and Ike in 2008 flow over the levees and push vast volumes of seawater to the lowest elevations in the fields. When the tides turn, the storm-ravaged cane fields become salt lakes.

But sugarcane is a hearty plant and, with good weather and time, the cane can rebound and produce a decent crop. Harvesting it will be more difficult and costly, but we can still hope for a mild autumn and a good price to help offset some of the additional costs we will incur in harvesting a bent and broken crop. On the other hand, we may not have much time to finish planting and harvesting before winter frosts and freeze become a concern. Further complicating the matter, sugarcane is a perennial crop and time will be needed to determine whether fields holding surge water for extended periods will recover next year.

According to Dr. Calvin Viator and his team of agricultural consultants, the worst of the wind damage to sugarcane from Gustav occurred in Terrebonne Parish, Assumption Parish, and parts of Lafourche, Ascension, Iberville, West Baton Rouge and Point Coupee parishes. The northeastern corner of the eye of the hurricane caused the worst stalk breakage, but this damage occurred virtually everywhere in the cane belt. The cane varieties that tend to produce higher tonnage suffered more breakage than lower-yielding varieties, and the brittleness of the higher-yielding varieties will make cutting the cane more problematic.

Hurricane Ike's eye stayed to our south as it moved in on Texas, but this meant that its counter-clockwise winds drove the sea surge deep into the Louisiana cane belt in a manner eerily familiar to those of us who experienced Hurricane Rita in 2005. In some areas, the damage was even worse than Rita. From my farm in Bourg, across Terrebonne, St Mary's, Iberia and Vermillion Parishes, levees were topped and standing water remains.

As a general rule, we keep a field in production, using existing root systems, for three years and, after harvesting the third crop, let that ground stay fallow for nearly a year before replanting. So I always have roughly 25 percent of my fields lying fallow, except for that brief time each year when we start harvesting mature cane for the purpose of planting the fallow ground. This generally occurs in August and September. But the rainy weeks before Gustav came left us way behind in our planting, so there is less newly planted cane to be lost to the surge. This may sound like good news, but the delay in planting increases our risk of not being able to plant some of the fields before winter sets in. This delay also has the potential of pushing harvest deeper into the winter months, when a heavy frost or hard freeze can destroy whatever is left in the fields.

In order to increase our chances of getting new growth from the damaged cane we will be planting over the next few weeks, we will use more acres of our mature cane as seed for the fallow fields. In my case, this will mean that I will use 260 acres of mature cane to plant 800 acres of fallow ground this year. Typically, I would use only 160 acres to plant that same acreage. Income from one hundred acres of sugarcane that I would normally deliver to the processing facility will be lost.

You have asked for my experience with crop insurance as a disaster assistance tool.

Our growers have traditionally had access to only one type of crop insurance policy, the Actual Production History (APH) program. The costs of APH buy-up coverage have been prohibitively high, as USDA's Risk Management Agency acknowledged this past year when it lowered the APH rates in response to potential competition from a farmer-developed Group Risk Program (GRP) policy. While the rates are lower, the buy-up coverage has not been seen as reducing our actual risks by a sufficient amount to make the added expense worthwhile for most of our farmers.

Despite the destructive natural forces that are sometimes unleashed against it, the sugarcane plant is a hearty survivor and catastrophic production losses, meaning losses of greater than 50 percent, are rare. Since 1995, when Louisiana sugarcane participation in crop insurance went from \$2 million in liability to over \$61 million, the cumulative loss ratio has been approximately .17. Since nearly 90 percent of our policies are the basic catastrophic coverage, which has been a prerequisite for disaster assistance eligibility in the past, this loss ratio can conceal significant losses to a farmer's bottom-line. The GRP policy will be available in the coming year and we are hopeful that the GRP program may be a more useful and affordable insurance policy for our growers in the future. Initial modeling suggests that it would be a significantly better risk management product in hurricane years.

The new permanent disaster assistance program included in the '08 Farm Bill has not been implemented and regulations explaining how the Department will administer the program are still under development. As I understand the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payment Program, or SURE, it provides payments to producers in disaster counties based on the crop insurance program. The revenue guarantee is equal to 115 percent of (payment rate x payment acres x payment yield). The payment rate is the crop insurance price election level, the payment acres are the insured planted acres and the payment yield is the crop insurance coverage level selected by the farmer times the crop insurance yield. The sum of this equation is then subtracted by the revenues from the whole farm (except that 85 percent of the direct government payments that most program crop farmers receive are excluded from this calculation) and multiplied by 60 percent.

If the goal is to provide a hand-up to farmers when they most need it, before the natural disaster becomes a full-fledged economic one, the SURE program's linkage to whole farm revenue is problematic. For sugarcane farmers, this requirement would mean that any SURE payment would come approximately a year after the disaster occurs. Based on the experience of many of our farmers who were hit hard in 2005, the assistance can arrive too late to save the farm, even if it does ameliorate some of the debt load after the fact. As a farmer dealing with another spike in input costs, the assistance is most helpful if it can be used to keep my employees working; my diesel tanks filled, and my banker hoping for the best.

Regrettably, we have been unable to find an accurate SURE calculator for sugarcane to gain a better understanding of the actual assistance that might be available to cane farmers, but the poorly performing crop insurance program it will be built upon would seem to reduce its effectiveness as a hurricane assistance program.

Congress has developed a disaster assistance mechanism that works. In response to the 2002 hurricanes, Congress developed a delivery mechanism for ad hoc assistance to

sugarcane growers in Louisiana that is tailored to the types and levels of damage associated with hurricanes and cane fields.—The mechanism, as improved in the Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act of 2006 (2006 Act), targeted a portion of the overall package to address losses and costs from planted cane that was lost to the hurricanes. Another portion of the package was designated to offset some of the increased planting costs and harvesting costs that we incurred. A final portion was allocated to address yield losses and other sector-wide losses. By apportioning the package in this way, Congress was able to link the bulk of the assistance directly to the specific losses or costs of the hardest-hit producers, while reserving a portion to address the yield losses that virtually every producer absorbed. In the current instance, given the uncertainty about the eventual losses, the delivery mechanism could be further refined to allow for quick release of some funds to address the plant-cane losses and the higher planting and harvesting costs, while reserving funds to address the yield losses that become clear later in the year.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in Louisiana, along with FSA's Economic Policy Analysis division in Washington, DC, have developed invaluable experience in operating this program and could, if provided sufficient resources, move expeditiously to implement such a program now.

In conclusion, Louisiana has been growing sugarcane commercially for well over 200 years. Our forbearers harvested cane during the worst days of the Civil War and the Great Depression. They survived the great flood of 1927 and went back to fanning after the waters receded, just as I and many of my friends have done twice in this decade. For the record, Louisiana sugarcane growers have received agricultural disaster assistance twice over our more than 200 years of production. The fact that both of those assistance packages were made necessary by intense hurricanes in this decade is a direct result of rampant coastal erosion. Unless we invest in energetic coastal restoration efforts soon, my farm may be beachfront property in a few short years before slipping quietly beneath the waves.

WALLACE R. ELLENDER III, BOURG, LA 70343
EXPERIENCE

Ellender Farms, Inc., 1993–Present, president and farmer, purchased family farm from my father, and increased it to 3200 acres. Manage an annual budget of 2 million dollars.

Hope Farm, Inc., 1977–1993, farmer, farmed 1200 acres of sugar cane with my father and brothers.

American Sugar Cane League, 1977–Present, Chairman, National Legislative Committee, 2006–Present, lobby for the sugar industry, in process of writing sugar portion of the Farm Bill, secured 40 million dollar disaster assistance to Louisiana sugar industry. Representative, Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), 2001–Present, liaison for sugar industry to assure healthy agricultural practices in the wetlands. Vice-Chairman, National Legislative Committee, 2004–2006, assisted with CAFTA opposition, testified before the US Senate Ag Committee on Farm Bill legislation. Dedicated Research Committee, 2003–2005, decided on the distribution of approximately ½ million dollars to various sugar cane research programs. Strategic Planning & Re-organization Committee, 2003–2005, reviewed and revamped the by-laws, implemented the restructuring of the League. Search Committee 2004 & 2006, assisted in the search for a new General Manager, assisted in the

search for and hiring of a new lobbyist for the League. Nominating Committee, 2001–2002, made nominations for new League Board members.

National Agriculture Technical Advisory committee (ATAC), 2005–Present, participate in advising the USDA & the Administration (USTR) on international trade policy regarding sugar.

First South Farm Credit, 2003–Present, Regional Director, assist in the review of the quarterly cooperative reports and make recommendations as needed.

Vision Christian Center, 2005–Present, Men's Leader, teach monthly Bible studies to men.

Bourg Recreation Center Board of Directors, 1990–2003, Chairman, 1994–1998, created the annual fiscal budget, made financial and staffing decisions for the Center.

Bayou Land YMCA Board of Directors, 1995–2001, President, 1998–2000, completed phase I of the basketball court.

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Committee, 1981–1990, approved conservation program practices.

EDUCATION

B.S. Agriculture Economics, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, 1977.

LSU Ag. Leadership Program, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, 1996.

TESTIMONY BY JAY HARDWICK, VICE CHAIRMAN ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL COTTON COUNCIL BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE

The National Cotton Council is the central organization of the United States cotton industry. Its members include producers, ginners, cottonseed handlers, merchants, cooperatives, warehousemen, and textile manufacturers. While a majority of the industry is concentrated in 17 cotton-producing states stretching from the Carolinas to California, the downstream manufacturers of cotton apparel and home furnishings are located in virtually every state.

The industry and its suppliers, together with the cotton product manufacturers, account for more than 230,000 jobs in the United States [U.S. Census of Agriculture]. Annual cotton production is valued at more than \$5.5 billion at the farm gate, the point at which the producer sells his crop [Economic Services, NCC]. In addition to the cotton fiber, cottonseed products are used for livestock feed, and cottonseed oil is used for food products ranging from margarine to salad dressing. While cotton's farm-gate value is significant, a more meaningful measure of cotton's value to the U.S. economy is its overall economic impact. Taken collectively, the annual economic activity generated by cotton and its products in the U.S. is estimated to be in excess of \$120 billion [Economic Services, NCC].

Mr. Chairman, I am Jay Hardwick from Newellton, LA, and I currently serve as Vice Chairman of the National Cotton Council. I am also a Director on the National Peanut Board, Vice Chairman of Cotton Inc., past President of the Louisiana Cotton Producers Association, Vice President of the Louisiana Cotton Warehouse Association, Vice President of Newellton Gin Co., a Director of Farm and Livestock Credit, Inc., member of the Louisiana Black Bear Management Program, and a Director of the Tensas Concordia Soil and Water Conservation District. Our family-operated farm includes 7,300 acres of cotton, corn, grain sorghum, peanuts, soybeans, and wheat in Northeast Louisiana adjacent to the Mississippi River. Our production mission is to achieve a viable and profitable farm enterprise while providing a balance between habitat and production resources with a minimum impact upon the farm ecosystem. Emphasis is placed on

conservation crop production methods including no-till, crop rotation, residue maintenance, erosion control and precision technologies to apply and reduce pesticides and nutrient resources to help restore and improve water, air, soil, wildlife habitat and crop production economics. Plentiful fish, deer, turkey, neotropical birds, migratory waterfowl, turtles, alligators, black bears, and increased sightings of eagles and various cat family members inhabit the property.

Thank you for holding today's hearing and thank you for allowing me to try to describe the devastating effects of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Senator LANDRIEU, we sincerely appreciated you taking time to tour some of the affected areas last weekend.

While my comments will focus on cotton, it is important to point out that no crop was spared damage. During Gustav our family farm received over 20 inches of rain and ruined or damaged essentially all of our crops. Much of the Louisiana cotton crop was at an extremely vulnerable stage of production. Many of the bolls were open on the plants as we are rapidly approaching harvest. Due to the extreme amounts of wind and rain much of the cotton that is still attached to the plants will not be harvestable due to rot or if harvested the quality of both lint and cottonseed will be significantly below normal.

Extension specialists from Louisiana State University estimate that revenue from the 2008 cotton crop will be reduced by between \$125 and \$137 million—a 52–57 percent decline in farm-gate value. Specialists also estimate that over 80,000 acres of cotton will not be harvested. On the remaining acres, yield losses will be dramatic. In many parishes, crops that were expected to produce 3 bales per acre are now projected to produce only 1 bale per acre. In addition to the yield losses, the revenue from the harvested cotton will be significantly less due to quality and grade reductions.

The impacts of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike are being felt far beyond the farm gate. Agriculture's infrastructure suffered physical damages due to the high winds and excessive rainfall. The economic losses extend beyond the physical damage as cotton gins, warehouses, and grain elevators rely on volume moving through their operations to cover their fixed costs and maintain their labor force. Unfortunately, many of our gins and warehouses will process significantly reduced volume or no volume at all in 2008.

With some of the worst damage in history farmers will look to crop insurance and the recently enacted permanent disaster program for assistance. Unfortunately, for many cotton farmers, the prospect of meaningful financial assistance from these programs is uncertain at best. While almost all cotton acres in Louisiana are insured at some level, more than half of the state's acres (54 percent) are insured with only the Catastrophic (CAT) level of coverage. This level of coverage will provide minimal benefits and then only if the crop had catastrophic losses. Some of the hardest hit parishes like Catahoula and Concordia Parishes with over 37,000 acres of cotton are only covered with CAT level policies. In addition, the producers who purchased buy-up crop insurance did not purchase the highest levels of coverage. Some may ask why so many producers did not purchase higher levels of crop insurance coverage. Historical experience has shown that in most years the expected benefits do not outweigh the costs of the higher coverage levels. Unfortunately, this year is not typical of most years.

I applaud the effort and foresight of Members of Congress for including a permanent disaster provision in the recently enacted farm bill. Unfortunately, I am concerned that the program will not be able to meet in

a timely manner the needs of farmers who have suffered devastating losses this year. First, due to budget constraints, the permanent disaster program was developed with only a fraction of the funding compared to spending under previous ad hoc disaster programs. Second, as currently written, the disaster program guarantee is based on the level of the farm's crop insurance coverage. This will do little to help those acres with CAT coverage. And third, while USDA has made excellent strides in implementing many of the provisions of the new farm law, we have yet to see the details of the permanent disaster provisions. It is also evident that the data required to administer the whole-farm, revenue-based disaster program will not be available for some time. This means any financial assistance, in the absence of an advance payment, can not be made available to farmers until the latter half of 2009. That is simply too late for those that have suffered losses.

As you know, today's modern farming operations require expensive inputs and investment. Input and technology costs have escalated in 2008 with skyrocketing fuel and fertilizer prices. We are experiencing these losses at the absolute worst time because we incurred maximum costs of production as the harvest approaches. We are now dealing both with the impact of the lost revenue for this year's crops and trying to finance next year's crops. Without timely assistance, many Louisiana growers will be unable to settle this year's outstanding debt or secure the necessary financing for next year's crop. In short, without timely assistance, some farmers will find themselves in a financial situation that will make it difficult to continue farming.

Louisiana is not the only state with losses due to Hurricane Gustav. USDA data indicate that approximately 470 thousand acres of cotton were planted in South Texas in 2008. USDA's preliminary estimates of harvested area imply approximately 400,000 will be harvested, leaving 70,000 acres abandoned. In southeast Arkansas, losses might run 25%, according an initial estimate by the Extension Service. Damage also is being reported in Mississippi, mainly in the south and central Delta counties where the heaviest rains fell and some fields flooded.

The National Cotton Council recently joined with other agricultural organizations in a letter to USDA's Risk Management Agency requesting expedited appraisals for crop insurance policy holders. This would help speed payments for those covered by crop insurance. However, more needs to be done. I encourage Congress to develop a plan that will deliver financial assistance to producers in a timely manner. Enhanced crop insurance coverage, timely ad hoc disaster relief, supplemental payments delivered in the same manner as direct payments, and enhancements to the provisions of the permanent disaster programs should all be considered in order to expedite assistance that is commensurate with the losses that have been incurred. In addition, additional funding for existing conservation program can be used as a means of providing assistance for restoration of damaged fields. Finally, I urge the Committee to consider providing some form of financial assistance to gins, warehouses and other key components of our infrastructure who will experience significant financial losses due to sharply reduced volumes.

Mr. Chairman, the economic losses caused by the hurricanes are dramatic and severe, and immediate assistance is needed. Many farmers simply do not have the financial resources to wait until 2009 for assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and recommendations and for giving me the opportunity to present testimony.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to S. 3001, the Department of Defense authorization bill.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

S. 3001

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 3001) entitled "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes", do pass with an amendment.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support the House amendment to S. 3001, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. This bill was voted out of the Senate Armed Services Committee by a unanimous vote back in April. Last week, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 88-8.

Over the last week, we have worked around the clock to reconcile the Senate and House versions of the Defense authorization bill. The compromise version of the bill—the House amendment to S. 3001—has now been approved by the House by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 392-39.

The bill that we bring before the Senate today contains many provisions that will improve the quality of life for our men and women in uniform, give them the tools that they need to defend our nation, and provide critical reforms to improve the operations of the Pentagon.

First and foremost, the bill would provide critical support to our men and women in uniform. For example, it would increase military pay by 3.9 percent—a half a percent more than the President requested; provide continued authority for the payment of enlistment and reenlistment bonuses, accession and retention bonuses for service members with critical skills or assigned to high-priority units, and other special bonuses and incentives needed to reward our troops and ensure that we can recruit and retain the people that we need in our military; authorize funds for military family housing and military construction projects needed to ensure that our troops have the housing that they deserve and our military has the facilities it needs for the national defense; and protect members of the military, family members and retirees from any increase in TRICARE fees, premiums, deductibles and copays.

The bill would increase the end strength of the Army, the Marine Corps, and the Army National Guard, to help reduce the incredible stress on

our troops. It would also establish and extend critical authorities needed by the Department of Defense in our current operations. For example, the bill would provide DOD the authority to use funds for quick-turnaround construction projects needed to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan; extend DOD's authority to provide "train and equip" funds and "stabilization and security assistance" so essential to the well-being of our troops; provide \$1.5 billion for the Commanders' Emergency Response Program, CERP, which commanders on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan consider the highest priority for protecting U.S. forces; and provide funding for critical initiatives, including \$2.2 billion for the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization's, JIEDDO's, ongoing efforts to defeat the threat of improvised explosive device, IEDs.

At a time when thousands of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are deployed around the world and our all-volunteer military is straining to meet the requirements of two ongoing conflicts while remaining prepared for other contingencies, these are steps that we simply must take. When our men and women in uniform are in harm's way, there is nothing more important.

The bill also includes a number of measures to ensure the proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

It would also ensure that the Iraqis use their own oil revenues rather than U.S. tax dollars to pay for large infrastructure projects and for the training and equipping of the Iraqi military. At the beginning of the Iraq war, then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz testified that Iraq would be able to "finance its own reconstruction" through oil revenues. That has not proven to be true. To date, the U.S. taxpayers have paid approximately \$48 billion for stabilization and reconstruction activities in Iraq. While the Iraqi government has generated more than \$100 billion in oil revenues since the war began, it has spent only a small fraction of that amount on its own reconstruction. The Iraqi government now has \$80 billion at its disposal to fund large scale reconstruction projects. Under these circumstances, it is inexcusable for U.S. taxpayers to continue to foot the bill for projects that Iraqis are fully capable of funding themselves.

Other provisions of the bill would help improve the management of the Department of Defense and protect taxpayer dollars. For example, the bill would institute improved cost controls for the acquisition of major weapon systems; require program managers to incorporate energy efficiency requirements into the performance parameters for such systems; establish new ethics standards to prevent personal conflicts of interest by contractor employees who perform acquisition functions on behalf of the Department of Defense; and establish a new database of information regarding contractor integrity, ensuring that this information