is the case and is due for its first reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 22) to designate certain land as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System, to authorize certain programs and activities in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask for its second reading but object to my own request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be read a second time on the next legislative day.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have notified a number of Members—I had a meeting with them at 9 o'clock this morning—that because of a Senator not allowing us to move forward on this legislation last night and throwing every procedural hurdle in the way of these bills, which is now in the form of one bill, we are going to have a vote Sunday morning in the Senate. So everyone should understand, Sunday morning we are going to have a vote in the Senate.

I have had a number of meetings with President-elect Obama. We have a lot to do. I spoke with Senator MIKULSKI right before coming in. I have spoken with Senator KENNEDY today. The Ledbetter legislation, to make things more fair for people, especially women, is the next piece of legislation we are going to move to after this bill. We have just a few days to do all this work.

As President-elect Obama has said, there are people out there who would love to work on Sunday. We are going to have to spend time on Saturdays, Sundays, and nighttime, especially during the first several months of this difficult time in which we find ourselves in this country. Everything that should be up is down. Alcoa is laying off 13,500 people today. The word is out that they expected about 400,000 jobs to be lost this month. They are reporting within the next few hours almost 700,000 jobs were lost this month. Do you think we can work a weekend, maybe take a Saturday vote or a Sunday vote? I think we better do that. Senators should cancel their travel plans this weekend.

I have a family just like everyone else does, and I would rather not be here this weekend. But I want everyone to understand—I am glad Republicans are on their retreat. That is important. We are going to have one later on. I hope the staff will alert them that on Sunday we are going to have a vote. I am sorry for the inconvenience, but as President-elect Obama has said, there are people out there who would like to be able to work on Sunday. They would like to work anytime; they don't have jobs. Mr. President, 670,000 people this month have lost jobs. Think about that—670,000 people have lost jobs.

Mr. President I want to say just one thing. This is Senator BYRD's 50th anniversary. I spoke at some length yesterday about his record. I don't want this day to go by without having acknowledged the 50th anniversary of Senator BYRD's service in the Senate. Senators will be coming to the floor today to talk about Senator BYRD's 50 years of service. At a later time, we will put that into a document and have that available for the public and individual Senators.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll

Mr. TESTER. 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.

## RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARDIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

## RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. CASEY. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate at 2:15 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled 3:04 p.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. MCCASKILL).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

## ISRAEL AND GAZA

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, a nation's first responsibility is to defend its citizens against hostile threats. The United States exercised that responsibility when the Taliban Government of Afghanistan supported terrorist attacks against our country. Israel has the responsibility to protect its citizens from Hamas terrorist attacks.

I am deeply saddened by the continued violence and loss of innocent lives on both sides of the Israel-Gaza border.

I strongly support Israel's right to defend its citizens against threats to its security and its existence. I wholeheartedly agree with President-elect Obama who defined the problem very clearly:

If somebody was sending rockets into my house, where my family slept at night I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that.

The recent military action in Gaza is in direct response to numerous rocket and mortar attacks from militants in the Hamas-controlled Gaza, which have killed and injured Israeli citizens and currently paralyzes the southern regions of Israel.

Southern Israel cities have been the target of over 4,000 rockets and thousands of mortar shells since 2001, the majority of which were launched after Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. During the more recent 6-month truce, more than 215 rockets were launched at Israel. Hamas has been extending the range of its striking capability, with new rockets supplied by Iran. The Israeli Government now knows that Hamas had acquired rockets that can reach Ashdod and even the outskirts of Beersheba.

Hamas' willingness to extend its reach deeper into Israel and its overall failure to end attacks exacerbates the already fragile humanitarian situation for the residents of Gaza and undermines efforts to attain peace and security in the region. As a result of the fighting, Gaza City and its main medical center, Shiffa Hospital, have been left without electricity and hospitals are pushed beyond their capacity to handle the number of victims. Hamas seems to care more about inflicting damage on Israel than the protection and welfare of its own citizens.

Hamas poses a critical challenge to the regional peace process. Labeled as a terrorist organization but holding seats in the Palestinian Government and acting as the controlling authority in Gaza, the organization's leaders encourage violence and cling to the belief that Israel itself should be destroyed. Questions remain as to whether or not the organization should even be included in peace negotiations, but the fact remains that the threat Hamas poses to Israel is an obstacle to any negotiation efforts.

I urge Israel and the Palestinians to take advantage of the current efforts to broker a sustainable cease-fire and a negotiated peaceful settlement. Any such cease-fire must include Hamas' ending its rocket and mortar attacks, recognize its neighbor's right to exist, renounce violence, and honor all past agreements in order to move toward a two-state solution based on mutual peace and security.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

## ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, we all know the American economy is in a challenged state. That is a nice

way of putting it. I spent about a week in December traveling around my State visiting 22 counties, meeting with people who had been working three jobs, had their hours reduced, were afraid they weren't going to be able to buy their grandkids Christmas presents. Letters coming to my office included a woman who said she inherited a small amount of money from her dad. She thought that would go to her daughter's wedding, but instead it was used to pay for her retirement because she had lost so much money from her retirement funds. We heard stories of a man and his wife who would put their daughters to bed at night and gather at the kitchen table, shaking their heads and wondering how they were going to make it. Those were the comments I heard when I was home in Minnesota in December.

I also saw some optimism and hope as I traveled the State and saw the growing energy economy and heard the enthusiasm for our new President-elect. Obviously, there was frustration with what has been going on with this administration for the past 8 years and how they have not had a forward-thinking plan for the economy. People have hope that is going to change.

I can tell there is widespread interest in the economic stimulus package proposed by the new President. There is widespread interest in my State for infrastructure spending, for the energy jobs. One thing I believe we need to devote some specific time to in the next few weeks—and I know the new President is interested in this—is the idea of looking not only at roads and bridges and infrastructure but to look at technological infrastructure, to figure out why we have had trouble competing with countries around the world.

When one talks to people in Park Rapids, MN, who go maybe a mile out of town, they can't get on the Internet or it costs them $700 a month if they are going to do satellite, or they can be stuck with dial-up that is so slow they can hardly use it, you get to understand the need for better technological infrastructure. What I finally figured out, after this 22-county tour—I had been trying to figure out why some companies say they are offering Internet service. I finally figured out what the problem is. In many parts of my State, they may have Internet service, but it is either much too slow or much too expensive.

As a country we have ensured that every American has access to telephone service and electricity regardless of economic status. We must now do the same for broadband Internet access. Broadband not only creates educational and health care opportunities, it can create opportunities for businesses and employment that would otherwise not exist in rural communities.

In these tough economic times, broadband deployment creates jobs—not only the direct creation of jobs in the tech sector but also the creation of even more indirect employment opportunities by increasing access to broadband.

After visiting 22 of Minnesota's counties, I convened a Broadband Roundtable in my State on December 29. I heard firsthand from people about the importance of making sure they have access to fast and affordable broadband. We have had success stories in our State, as well.

One story I heard when I was out in a small town in Minnesota—Sebeka—they began diversifying early into cutting-edge technologies, including fiber optic infrastructure, digital telephone switching, cable and satellite TV, broadband Internet service to 100 percent of their customers. They have a very high percentage—I think 70 to 80 percent—of people who are actually purchasing this high-speed Internet in a very small town in a remote area of Minnesota.

The government of Carver County, MN, is leading a collaborative effort to interconnect county facilities with cities, school districts, townships, and other entities in the development of high-speed communications.

Through a number of funding and technical assistance programs, Minnesota's Blandin Foundation's Broadband Initiative has worked in rural Minnesota communities to educate community leaders and to get these partnerships started.

Despite these local success stories, however, much more needs to be done. The overall reality is America has become an international laggard on broadband. In 2000, the United States ranked 4th among 30 nations surveyed in broadband subscribership, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Today, the United States is 15th on the list. So in the last 8 years, we have gone from 4th in the world to 15th in the world. That is not the kind of progress that is going to keep this country moving and get us back on track.

According to the International Telecommunications Union, the United States is now perched as 24th in the world in broadband penetration. Canada has a higher level of broadband penetration and digital opportunity than we do.

Broadband adoption in the United States does continue to grow—from 47 percent of homes in March 2007 to 55 percent in April 2008. But the figure is significantly lower for those living in rural America: only 38 percent.

Of course, we have to consider more than just access, as I noted earlier. We need to look at speed. We need to look at speed if we are going to compete with countries such as India and Japan.

So we have work ahead of us. All of us understand broadband is a critical infrastructure for the 21st century. By one estimate—to give you a sense of what we are talking about, jobs—every 1 percentage point increase in broadband penetration per year would lead to the creation of nearly 300,000 new jobs. That is why it is essential that all communities, including our rural communities, have the opportunity to take advantage of the opportunities offered by this 21st-century infrastructure. I want these jobs in my State going to Thief River Falls or Lanesboro or Crookston instead of going off to other countries such as Japan and India. It is that simple. I want these jobs to stay in the United States. We have seen the challenge before to make sure our rural communities are not left behind as technology develops.

For example, there are still many Americans who can remember growing up in homes with no electricity and no telephone service. In 1935, about 80 percent of all homes and towns and cities in the United States had electricity, but fewer than 12 percent of farms in America had electricity, and only about 25 percent had telephone service, which was often unreliable.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration, REA. The REA helped organize and support farmer-owned electric cooperatives to bring electricity to farms. By 1949—this was from 1935 to 1949—more than three-quarters of all farms in America had electricity. So with those standards that were put in place, it went from 12 percent to 75 percent. That is an amazing achievement during a time of crisis because people believed you could get this done.

The penetration of telephone service actually took longer. In 1949, only 36 percent of America's farms had telephone service. That year, a telephone amendment was added to the Rural Electrification Act, which made loan funds available to finance rural telephone systems. In just a little more than a decade, nearly 80 percent of farms had telephone service.

Even much of our modern transportation infrastructure—including paved roads and steel and concrete bridges—has come into existence only in the past 70 years, thanks to both the New Deal and President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway Program. Our broadband infrastructure presents us with the same challenge to make sure no one is left behind.

President-elect Obama understands that broadband must now be considered a basic part of our national infrastructure. He also understands that investment in our broadband infrastructure is essential to our long-term prosperity.

A few weeks ago, in a weekly address, President-elect Obama announced that a key part of his economic recovery plan would involve increasing broadband deployment and adoption, saying:

> It is unacceptable that the United States ranks 15th in the world in broadband adoption.

On Monday of this week, I sent a letter to the President-elect applauding his efforts to include investment in our Nation's information infrastructure as

part of an economic stimulus package. I also asked that he consider these partnerships that we have seen work so well in our State, and that matching grants on the Federal level to work with the local communities would be one way to spur broadband development.

I finally asked him to look at the fact that this is not just about communities that have no access, it is also about communities that have bad access or slow access or too expensive access. If we really want to get the broadband infrastructure in place, we have to make it work for everyone, just as what Dwight D. Eisenhower did with the highway system in the 1950s, and just as President Roosevelt did with rural electrification in the 1930s and 1940s.

I believe any economic stimulus package must include mechanisms designed to bring affordable and fast broadband to this country. An economic stimulus package should fully fund the Broadband Data Improvement Act, which I cosponsored and which passed last Congress.

Any economic stimulus package, as I mentioned, must also fund matching grants for community-level partnerships that demonstrate strong cooperation among local governments, businesses, schools, health care, and others.

Finally, one aspect of the Nation's information infrastructure that may continue to elude us absent some type of Federal involvement is the creation of an advanced, interoperable communications network for public safety.

I still remember hearing when one of our police officers was shot and killed in St. Paul, MN, how those who were trying to apprehend the person, the murderer in this case, were trying to communicate. When they were up in the helicopter, they literally had to have multiple walkie talkies and telephones, sometimes six or seven, to try to match up with all the phone systems that were in use across the area.

Well, since then we have had improvements in the large metropolitan area of the Twin Cities in our interoperability, but we do not have that kind of matching and that kind of cooperation in the rural parts of our State, nor do we have it across the country.

The first responsibility of government is to protect its citizens. The fact that our Nation's police, fire, and other first responders, including those in our rural areas, still do not have access to such a network more than 7 years after the tragic events of September 11 is simply unacceptable. I believe consideration of this issue in the context of broadband stimulus measures may present the best chance to address this continuing problem.

I join the President-elect and so many in this Senate in calling for 21st-century technology to create jobs and help our economy be more robust and competitive in the long term. This is about creating immediate jobs, and we can get that with technological infrastructure. But it is also about creating jobs in a way that leaves us with something that will actually move this economy forward.

This technological infrastructure, whether it be the electricity grid or whether it be the broadband I have spoken about today, is really our rural electrification. It is our interstate highway program. It is our generation's chance to build this infrastructure in a way that will fit the changing needs of this country and allow us to compete on the world stage.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## TRIBUTE TO SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I couldn't help thinking today, as we were sitting in our weekly caucus—that the senior member of our party here in the Senate and the most senior Member of the Senate, and the senior Senator from West Virginia, the distinguished ROBERT C. BYRD, has now served 50 years which is an all time record as the longest serving Senator in our country.

I have had the privilege of serving beside Senator BYRD for 34 years and am proud to call him a very good friend. When I first came to the Senate as a new Member, it was ROBERT BYRD who took me aside and talked to me about the rules of the Senate. Senator BYRD took the time to speak about the rules and history of the Senate, but he also talked about the customs, and practices of this body. He spoke of the way you treat each other, and how you treat members of the other party. He also explained the customary order of recognition, the kinds of courtesies you use and the importance of taking into consideration the needs of another Senator.

Senator BYRD and I have sat here through inaugurations of Presidents, and we have traveled together to funerals of colleagues with whom we have served. His late wife, Erma, and my wife, Marcelle, were friends and would often ride together down to the Senate for Senate gatherings. I know I would always enjoy running into Erma and BOB in the grocery store in McLean, VA. After a while, we would tend to forget what it was we had gone to the store for because we would be catching up on the news of the Senate. Throughout it all, BOB BYRD has always had that great sense of what it means to be a Senator.

I said many times on the floor of this Senate that there are only 100 of us who have the privilege at any given time to serve here and the American people. BOB BYRD has always understood that better than most of us ever will. We can be and should be the conscience of the Nation.

We are, above all, a Senate of reasonable men and women who live by very specific rules, and we hurt both the Senate and the country if we ignore those rules. So many times I have heard Senator BYRD, who would see us moving away from the rules which guide us, stand up to address the Chair and remind each one of us what it means to be a Senator, what it means to protect those principals and what it means to serve this country.

Senators come and go. All of us will at some time leave this body. But those Senators who do the most to uphold and keep the functions and history of the Senate alive are the ones who will make it a better place for the next generation of Senators. Senator BYRD has authored histories of this Chamber, but then he has also lived the history of this Chamber.

I salute my good friend from West Virginia. I look forward to serving with him for years to come.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I rise today to honor a giant of the Senate, my colleague and the senior Senator from West Virginia, ROBERT C. BYRD.

Yesterday we watched a number of new Senators take an enormously important oath to serve our country and to defend our Constitution. I was included in taking that oath and I couldn't help but think of my new colleagues. If these new Senators are looking for an inspiration, a guiding light, or a model, the way that I did some years ago, they need look no further than the seat directly behind our distinguished majority leader.

In that seat they will find a man who took that same oath that we did 50 years ago today. Senator BYRD has taken that oath a total of nine times. He has cast more votes than anyone in the history of the Senate. He has held more leadership positions than anyone in the history of the Senate. He has served longer than anyone in the Senate. He has literally written the book on the Senate and lived the story of the Senate over five decades.

ROBERT C. BYRD is nothing short of a legend. However, 50 years ago today he was a young man from West Virginia who married a coal miner's daughter. He had spent 4 years in the West Virginia Legislature and 6 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

No one could know in 1959 that he would be a legend in 50 years. What they did know was ROBERT CARLYLE BYRD was an ambitious self-starter who would put himself through law school while serving in the U.S. Congress.

They knew Senator BYRD was always willing to help a colleague and to provide advice and guidance.

In 1959 they knew ROBERT BYRd had married his grade school sweetheart—