

Our children, Trevor, Siena, and Michael, have never known anything other than their dad leaving each week to come back to Washington, DC, for my work. All three of them are incredible, and it has been a blessing and a privilege just to be their dad.

I have also been very blessed with a great set of parents who have stood by me through thick and thin, and also the rest of my extended family. I also have wonderful friends who have been there with me and my family through the highs and the lows.

Lastly, most importantly, I want to thank God for allowing me to be here. I have been encouraged by some not to mention God because it looks hypocritical because of my own personal failings, but I would argue that I have not mentioned him enough. I am glad the Lord not only forgives, but he actually likes it when we give Him thanks. So, Lord, thank you for all you have done in my life. I hope I can do better in the future. I hope I can learn to love You with all my heart, soul, and to love others as myself.

My colleagues, I bid you farewell. Know that you will all be in my prayers.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL.) The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

ILLINOIS FLOODING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we have heard some terrible stories about severe weather and the damage it is causing across the United States. My heart goes out to the people of Tuscaloosa, AL, and all the communities in the South that were ravaged by tornadoes of record force and velocity.

In the Midwest, our problems are more subtle but also devastating in terms of the impact of floodwaters. It is nothing new in our part of the world. We have the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers at the southern tip of our State, further north on the Mississippi, the Illinois River and the Missouri River. Whenever there is heavy rainfall in one area or more, it ends up raising the levels of those rivers to perilous heights, which can inundate communities.

I can't tell my colleagues how proud I am of the people who come forward in the midst of this type of challenge every single year. Thank goodness it seems as though there is never a lack of volunteers. People are always willing to step up, starting with the Na-

tional Guard. They always do the best job possible, and I thank them over and over for what they do. Then, local law enforcement works overtime—the firefighters, the police, and all the rest. Then there is the extra work that is going on in hospitals and clinics and nurses and doctors working overtime.

In my part of the world too, State and Federal employees have pitched in at every level, starting with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Natural Resources of the State of Illinois, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It is an amazing outpouring of support.

Last Friday, I boarded a plane in Chicago and flew down to Marion, IL, and took a helicopter into Cairo. Cairo, of course, is at the southern tip of our State, as I mentioned earlier, at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers. I saw there some things going on in the town of Cairo, IL, which were truly frightening and disturbing.

This is a town which in its heyday was one of the major port cities in Middle America. Cairo, as the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers came together and then coursed on down to the Gulf of Mexico, was a major city with major economic activity. Over the years, as river traffic changed and the economy changed, Cairo changed too. Now it has a population of a little less than 3,000 people. Many of them are very poor. They have an African-American mayor, Mayor Childs. I believe he is their first, if not their second, African-American mayor. They have had issues of racial strife over the last 50 years. They struggle to keep businesses in place. Their schools are always challenged, and now, on top of that, comes a flood.

If you went along the Ohio River leading up to Cairo, you would see an amazing levee. It is the kind of wall of protection, concrete wall of protection, which every river community would love to have—on the Mississippi side, not so much. But the interesting thing I found when I went down there is even that side of the river, the Ohio River, with this huge concrete levee, has serious problems. It turns out that the water table is so high in Cairo, IL, that the pressure of the rising Ohio River is forcing the water into what are known as sand boils. So out of nowhere, in the midst of a lot or a street, up pops a geyser of river water. You think, what is going on here? It is 10, 15, 20-50 feet away from the levee. That is because the entire ground is so saturated and the river is working its way underneath, eating up the underlayment.

I walked along there with a National Guardsman who was taking pictures of the scene. We went to one street that had been closed with two major openings where water was bubbling, and as the National Guardsman was taking my photograph, the street collapsed under him and he fell 2 or 3 feet down because all of this water has eaten out all of the substrata under this street.

That is why this has become so serious that the mayor, Mayor Childs, started with the voluntary evacuation and then last Saturday night said: Let's everybody leave this town. We don't know what is going to happen next. That is the reality not only of Cairo but of several other communities.

The 2,800 people of Cairo, IL, were evacuated Saturday when the Ohio River reached its highest level since 1937. It rose above the 15½-foot level this weekend and is expected to go higher. Five other Illinois communities are now under a voluntary evacuation order. The people of Old Shawneetown, Junction, Brookport, and Golconda are being asked to clear out for their own safety.

The biggest threat of major damage is still at Cairo. I was in Cairo just a few days ago, and I can tell you the water levels there were continuing to rise.

I show you a picture of a home in Cairo, IL. The water level is already so high that the home is uninhabitable. I saw many homes like this, but I also saw some superhuman efforts which are hard to even describe, where people decided, even with a home that close to the river, they were going to build a wall of sandbags around their home and save it. It sounds impossible, but they are doing it. The sandbags are up to 5 feet high, holding back the water which, if they were not there, would have inundated the home. The pumps are pumping water out from the home into the surrounding areas, and people are up night and day, 24 hours a day, in rowboats, going back and forth trying to preserve the one thing on Earth that means so much to them—their home. That is the kind of battle that is taking place in homes all around Alexander County and Cairo. The sustained high water level has put an unprecedented amount of pressure on the levees.

As I mentioned earlier, these giant sand boils are forming, and they are working all night to try to contain them. Local volunteers and National Guardsmen are doing all they can, but the Ohio River is expected to stay at or above flood stage for the foreseeable future, and the levee may not withstand that pressure. If Cairo's levee bursts, the Army Corps estimates the town will be inundated with as much as 15 feet of water.

The entire State of Illinois is operating under a state of emergency; 320 National Guardsmen are on hand to help evacuate people and monitor water levels. The State has issued and helped fill more than 1 million sandbags, working with the Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers, and local responders to put in generators and supplies where they are needed.

My thoughts are with the people and families affected by the floodwaters in southern Illinois, especially those who had to leave their homes. I am grateful for all the people, military and civilian alike, who are working around the clock to control the Ohio River.

General Walsh is in charge of the Army Corps of Engineers' operations in this area. I talked to him several times over the weekend. He has a very, very difficult decision to make. I have seen it made in the past. It is never easy. The decision he has to make is, if a city is threatened, like Cairo, IL, he has to determine whether it is the right thing to do to open a levee to relieve the water pressure of the rivers by flooding adjoining farmland. So people who are now perhaps only minor victims of flooding would see their farmlands inundated. That is in Missouri, and they do not like the idea. Who would? They resisted it in court, and at two levels now the court has said it is an Army Corps of Engineers' decision.

I spoke to General Walsh all through the weekend, and he walked me through this decision. What I said to him I will repeat on the floor. I said: This is a difficult, hard decision you have to make. You will get no pressure from me. I believe that Cairo, IL, is right now teetering on the edge and could be inundated with floodwater and 2,800 people could lose their homes. That is my side of the equation, along with these other communities. But I know you have to make the calculation on rainfall, the level of the rivers, and trying to make some calculation about critical infrastructure in both instances. And I said: Just use your best engineering and scientific judgment. I will back you up, whatever you decide.

Well, he has put in place the explosives to blow the levee downriver on the Missouri side to relieve the pressure not only in Illinois but in Kentucky and I think parts of Tennessee as well. I think that may be a decision to be made within the next few minutes. Whatever his decision, whatever the Army Corps decides, I will stand by it because I know it is a good-faith effort to do the right thing. And this I will say: If they end up flooding some farmland in Missouri, I will stand by my colleagues in that State, as well as all others in the Midwest, to make sure that those people are made whole, that they have some recovery through our government for losses in farm profits and the like. It is the least we can do. If they end up saving a city, then the cost to the government will be dramatically less than it might otherwise have been. It is a hard, hard decision. Having seen it firsthand, my sympathy goes to the Army Corps of Engineers and all the professionals who are fighting this battle every single day.

DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night at about 9 o'clock, I received a call at my home in Springfield, IL, from Vice President BIDEN. It was kind of a surprising call on a Sunday night, and I was even more surprised when he said Osama bin Laden had been captured and killed and President Obama would be making a statement very

shortly. I waited up to hear that statement. I was catching a plane early this morning, but I wanted to hear it firsthand.

I guess every single one of us can remember where we were on 9/11. I know where I was. I was just a few feet away from here. We were in an office, a room just off the Capitol floor here—the Senate floor—in a meeting with Senator Daschle when we heard about a plane crashing into the Trade Center in New York and then another one. And then we realized this was not an accident. We watched, as America watched, and we wondered would we be next, this building, this big target of a building, the U.S. Capitol. Thank goodness the courage of passengers on a plane that was brought down in Pennsylvania probably saved many lives, maybe my own.

But we came to know that behind it all was a man named Osama bin Laden who declared war on the United States of America and was prepared to kill thousands of innocent people to push his terrible extremist agenda. For 10 years, we have been engaged in the largest global manhunt in history to find this man. President Bush, I am sure, used every resource of the government to do that job, and I commend him for that effort even though he was not successful. But last night, because of the courage of Navy SEALs and our military, who stepped up, Osama bin Laden was captured and killed.

I know, having spoken to people in the White House, that the President stuck his neck out on this because there was a question as to whether he was actually there. They believed there was enough evidence, and the President said: Go forward. We did it without any loss of life on the American side or any loss of innocent life of civilians.

But it appears now that we have taken away the leader of al-Qaida. That is a good development for all of us. I do not know if it means there will be a more peaceful world. We probably should assume the opposite for at least the time being, that these terrorist organizations will now strike at the United States to establish they are still credible. Well, we have to be vigilant. We have to stop them before it happens. And we have to pursue every single one of them for whatever it takes to bring them to justice.

Perhaps, though, it will go in another direction. Perhaps we will find that once al-Qaida, the head of the snake, has been chopped off, perhaps al-Qaida will start to wither, and I hope it does. If it does, maybe some other organizations will have second thoughts about the terrorism business. That would be the best outcome, even better if we could start bringing our troops home from Afghanistan.

I commend the men and women in uniform, those yesterday who showed such courage, those in the intelligence community who have worked night and day for almost 10 years trying to find this man. I commend the President for

showing the kind of leadership we needed to bring to justice the most dangerous terrorist criminal on the face of the Earth. It is something that I think speaks well for our government and for our people.

There is one other point I would like to make, and the President made it last night in his statement. He repeated what had been said by President George W. Bush after 9/11. I had my differences with President Bush, but there were moments when I could not have agreed with him more and particularly the moment when he made it clear that our war against terrorism was not a war against Islam. It was not a war against Muslims or Muslim Americans. I was so glad he did it because we have seen ample evidence of discrimination against people of that religion who have had nothing to do with terrorism but, unfortunately, have been discriminated against. Last night, the President repeated what we all believe: Islam is not the enemy. Extremism and terrorism are the enemies. We will work with Muslim Americans and Muslims around the world to protect their religion, their honored religion, and will work with them to reduce terrorism.

The President also reminded everyone listening last night that when it came to the victims of Osama bin Laden's terrorism, Muslim people were the victims time and time again. He was no friend of the Muslim community himself. His life, unfortunately, of killing and violence took its toll in many communities, including Muslim communities around the world.

I commend those who continue to work night and day, at every single level—Federal, State, and local—to deal with the threat of terrorism. This eradication of Osama bin Laden is an important step, but there is still much more to be done in terms of fighting this battle. I take pride in the work that has been done, a pride that is shared, I am certain, by every resident of Illinois and people all across the United States.

Mr. President, 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.

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

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

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed in morning business.

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

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, every one of us knows where we were at the moment we heard the tragic news of the attacks on this Nation on September 11. And I trust that all of us will long treasure the moment we first heard the great news last night that Osama bin Laden, after a decade of determined