

Again, thank you for your oversight and for your consideration of my concerns. I look forward to working with you this Congress.

Sincerely,

TOM A. COBURN, M.D.,
U.S. Senator.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I have tried to be patient. I understand that. But I am asking one last time—I am asking my ranking member, I am asking the other members of my committee, I am asking my Democratic colleagues and Republican colleagues—please, in the next few hours, please, let your voice be heard to your leaders—the minority leader and the majority leader—and please try to come to some reasonable agreement.

I think the cloture motion is quite reasonable, the cloture motion Senator REID has put down. If we could agree to that, get 60 votes or more, we could move on and pass this reauthorization, which is so important for job creation in America.

We are 3 years behind schedule—not 6 months, not 8 months, but 3 years behind schedule. We have been operating this program—a very good program, one of the best—every 3 months, sometimes one month, sometimes a bit longer, but people have to guess whether we are going to extend it. That is no way to run an airline or a train or a bus or even a two-seated car, for that matter. You have to have a long runway here to get good things done and to stop wasting taxpayer money and their time.

So I am going to ask, please, let's try to get cloture.

Finally, the States that are most affected—the Senators who represent these States might want to be heads up—but Colorado, Maryland, Virginia, California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Texas and Alabama are among the States that benefit the most from this program. All our States benefit. Companies in my own State of Louisiana have received some of these awards and have gone on to hire hundreds, if not thousands, of people. But these other States have managed to actually get themselves to the front of the line.

I thank Senator BROWN for his co-sponsorship of this bill. I thank other Senators from these States. But the Texas and Florida and Alabama Senators, the New York Senators, the Senators from Ohio and Pennsylvania, particularly, Massachusetts and California—the top of the list—have a lot to lose if we cannot get this program reauthorized.

I yield the floor and 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. SHELBY. Madam 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.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed in morning business for 8 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TORNADO SYSTEM DISASTER IN ALABAMA

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I rise to thank my colleagues in the Senate and countless others across the country for their outpouring of support and offers of assistance to my State of Alabama in this time of need.

On April 27—this last week—an unprecedented tornado system struck the State of Alabama, claiming hundreds of lives and destroying thousands of homes and businesses. At last count, 236 people in Alabama alone were dead, with thousands more injured and a lot missing. It will take many years and potentially billions of dollars for my State to fully recover from this catastrophic disaster.

We have received calls from my fellow Senators, many of whom recently experienced destruction in their own States due to floods and deadly storms, with offers of help. To those who have reached out, I wish to offer my sincere gratitude on behalf of the people of Alabama. I also wish to thank President Obama and FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate for their swift response and commitment to restoring our State.

Their words of encouragement to disaster victims during their visit to Alabama helped ease the grief burdening local families, and their work with Gov. Robert Bentley and Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Art Faulkner has provided vital assistance during these difficult times. This continued level of Federal coordination is critical to ensuring that Alabama gets back on its feet as quickly as possible.

I have never in my life seen such devastation to the extent I saw during my visit to my home State of Alabama recently. Giant oaks lie flattened and splintered. Homes throughout the State were demolished, leaving thousands homeless and reliant on the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and others for shelter. At one point last week, over 1 million Alabama residents were without power—almost one-quarter of the State's population. It was gut-wrenching to walk through scattered rubble and realize it was once the site of someone's home or someone's business. The scale and the magnitude of destruction can only be described as hell on Earth.

In our State, while larger cities such as Birmingham and Tuscaloosa—my hometown—suffered extensive damage, so did other rural areas. Communities such as Pratt City, Pleasant Grove, Concord, Rainsville, Hackleburg, Cullman, and many others also incurred the wrath of the storm system and are now trying to assess the extent of their damage.

In DeKalb, Marion and Franklin Counties alone, we have seen nearly 100 deaths. Virtually every part of the State was touched by storms, and all of us were affected. The pain and loss that families are experiencing are still fresh. Many remain in shock.

However, we must also recognize that Alabama was not the lone victim of the storm. As we continue our cleanup and recovery efforts, so do the people of Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia, Louisiana, and Kentucky. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the affected States. We stand willing and able to assist you, as you have offered similar support to us.

I want to reassure the people of Alabama and all the affected States that we will do everything we can on the Federal level to restore life as it was before. My staff and I are working with the State, FEMA, and the other Federal agencies to ensure as quick and efficient a recovery as possible.

Thousands of Alabamians have opened their homes, donated supplies, made contributions, and rushed to help in any way they could. After witnessing the selfless generosity of complete strangers and the sheer resilience of those affected by the storms, I have never been more proud to call Alabama my home.

It will take a lot of work and help from volunteers, but I am convinced that, together, we can overcome this terrible tragedy.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

CONFIRMATION OF KEVIN HUNTER SHARP AND SKIP DALTON

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, yesterday the Senate confirmed the nominations of Kevin Hunter Sharp to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee and Roy "Skip" Dalton to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida. Though I was necessarily absent from the vote, if present and voting I would have voted "yea." I fully support the nomination of Mr. Sharp to fill a vacancy in Tennessee, and I am pleased that Mr. Dalton was confirmed by unanimous consent.

Roy Dalton, nominee for the Middle District of Florida, is currently a partner at Dalton & Carpenter. Mr. Dalton previously worked as a counsel to my friend, Senator Mel Martinez of Florida, and had a long career in private practice in Orlando, FL. I have known Mr. Dalton for many years, and I am pleased that the Senate has acted on his nomination.

Madam President, the high level of judicial vacancies puts at serious risk the ability of all Americans to have a fair hearing in court. I congratulate Senator LEAHY and Senator GRASSLEY on their leadership and hope that we can all continue to work together to address the backlog of judicial nominations.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I was unable to return to Washington, DC, and was therefore unable to cast a vote for rollcall vote No. 62, the nomination of Kevin Hunter Sharp, of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee. Had I been present, I would have voted yea to confirm the nominee.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT JAMES A. JUSTICE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, it is with a solemn heart that I must honor the life and service of a soldier from my home State today, SSG James A. Justice of Grimes, IA. He was killed by enemy small arms fire in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan, at the age of 32. Staff Sergeant Justice died trying to rescue the crew of a downed helicopter that made a hard landing in Alah Say District, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Justice has served in the U.S. Armed Forces since September of 1998. He was assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry, Camp Dodge, Johnston, IA. He was deployed to Kuwait as part of Operation Desert Spring in 2001, the Multinational Force Observer peacekeeping mission in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt in 2003-2004, and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005-2006. He volunteered to deploy to Afghanistan in November of 2010. In Afghanistan, he was one of approximately 2,800 members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division.

Staff Sergeant Justice is survived by his wife Amanda Jo and daughter Caydence Lillian; his father and mother Larry and Lillian Justice; a brother and two sisters; as well as many other family and friends.

Sergeant Justice's family remembers him as a caring individual who was proud of the work he was doing for his country. He wanted nothing more than to serve side by side with his brothers and sisters in arms. His fellow soldiers remember him as a charismatic, natural leader and an integral part of his unit's community. The loss of Sergeant Justice is one that will be felt not only by his family and loved ones but by the entire Iowa Army National Guard and all those that were privileged enough to have known him.

My thoughts and prayers are with the Justice family in this incredibly trying time. While words cannot express the debt that we as a Nation owe to Sergeant Justice and his family, I would like to take this time to remember the sacrifice that he made so that we can enjoy the freedoms that this Nation provides.

TRIBUTE TO JOE RICHARDSON

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, when most people think of how our government works, they tend to think of the elected officials, the President, Senators, House Members, and of the

institutions in which they serve. However, in order for elected officials to fulfill their constitutional duties, Members of Congress rely on many individuals and institutions whose work is vital to the basic functions of government. These are individuals who often work in relative obscurity, but whose contributions are often no less important than those of the more visible actors and institutions who stand before the public.

I rise today to recognize one such individual who, over his decades-long career of service at the Congressional Research Service, the nonpartisan research branch of the U.S. Congress, has had provided a profound and lasting contribution to the U.S. Congress. That individual, Joe Richardson, the food and nutrition policy analyst of CRS, will soon be leaving CRS and I, for one, feel that it is not only important, but vital, for Joe to be recognized for his decades of public service to the U.S. Congress and to the American public.

As a long-time member of the Agriculture Committee, on which I served as both the chair and ranking Democrat on several occasions, my staff and I relied heavily on Joe Richardson on numerous occasions. He provided technical assistance and professional judgment in the formulation of the nutrition title of the 2002 and 2007 farm bills, and also played a key role in the committee's successful enactment of the 2004 and 2010 child nutrition reauthorization. In each of these cases, Joe went above and beyond the call of duty—in many cases enduring, like the rest of us, long, late night conference committee meetings that would carry on for weeks, even months. As a result of his efforts, I can say with confidence that, absent Joe's efforts, the legislation that we produced would not have been nearly as sound. More importantly, because of Joe's help, each of these pieces of legislation succeeded in its core mission—helping to ensure that millions of Americans are able to obtain a sufficient and nutritious diet.

Each of us, in one way or another, takes for granted the work of others as we do our own jobs. This is not because their efforts are not noticeable, but rather, because the efforts are so consistent and steadfast, carried out with humility and without any expectation of praise or recognition. This is exactly how Joe has carried out his duties over the years. But I would be remiss in not taking the opportunity to stand up and thank Joe for his truly remarkable service to the Congressional Research Service, to Congress, and to the country. I have no doubt, after such long service, that moving on to new opportunities and challenges is not without its bittersweet moments for Joe. But I know that Joe can move on to these challenges secure in his knowledge that he has discharged his duties with the utmost professionalism and competence. He has been a pillar of the food and nutrition assistance policy

community for years. For his service, I am grateful.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I am pleased to recognize and commend Joe Richardson for his dedicated service as a Specialist in Social Policy at the Congressional Research Service.

The Congressional Research Service, CRS, was formed in 1914 as a Federal agency within the legislative branch to provide Congress with a nonpartisan source of information. For nearly a century, CRS has supplied valuable policy analysis to committees and Members of both the House and Senate, and it continues to play a vital role in all stages of the legislative process.

Joe Richardson has been with CRS for nearly 40 years and has proven himself to be an expert agricultural policy analyst, particularly with regard to our domestic food assistance programs. These programs address many needs of America's poor, youth, and elderly, and continue to be very important in assisting our rural and underserved communities. Joe's contributions throughout his tenure have been invaluable in this effort, and his insightful input will undoubtedly be missed.

As a member and former chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have greatly benefitted from Joe's knowledge and experience. His expertise has helped the committee formulate and pass a number of important pieces of legislation, such as the past several farm bills which authorize a wide range of agricultural and food assistance programs. His timely reports and analyses have allowed Congress to better monitor, update, and improve nutrition programs as economic conditions change and the need for efficiency greatens.

We are forever grateful for Joe's service and commitment to agriculture policy and the U.S. Congress, and I wish him the very best in his future endeavors.

Mr. LUGAR. Madam President, from 1987 until 2002, I served as either the chairman or ranking minority member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The jurisdiction of the committee is quite broad. One important portion of that jurisdiction is food and nutrition programs.

During my years of service on the Agriculture Committee, the committee has considered several significant changes in the food and nutrition programs. However, one constant presence throughout all those changes was Joe Richardson of the Congressional Research Service. Now, after 40 years at the Congressional Research Service, Joe has decided to retire.

Joe's thorough knowledge of the history and programmatic details of nutrition programs was vitally important in those deliberations. Moreover, his cogent, thoughtful, and nonpartisan analysis was respected on, and sought after by, both sides of the aisle, both chambers of Congress, and within the administrations of both parties. During