

day early vote period back to 8, under the guise, well, we are going to make the amount of hours the same by giving the supervisors of elections discretion so that they could increase the voting days on early votes from 8 to 12 hours? But that is a ruse, because that means the election supervisors are going to have to pay time and a half, and those election supervisors are under the same kind of fiscal constraints that all of the other levels of government are right now and, as a result, what is going to happen is the voting hours are not going to be extended, and the State legislature has just constricted the number of voting days from 14 down to 8—and, by the way, they didn't let it run right up to the day before the election; they backed it off several days before the election, which would be the last day of early voting.

Why, when we want to make it easier to vote? Well, doesn't the legislature—and I hope the Governor, who has this bill coming to him—understand that it is a tremendous convenience to senior citizens to make it easier for them, instead of having to stand in a long line on election day, that over a 2-week period they can go and vote in a designated place?

Is there some reason they are trying to make it harder for senior citizens to vote? Well, it could be a lot of politics in this, but the fact is they are making it harder to vote, when in fact it ought to be the opposite.

I wish I could report to the Senate that that was the only thing they have done, but it is not. They made it harder to register to vote. As a matter of fact, well-respected organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, for years and years have taken it as their responsibility to go out and try to register people to vote. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization, which has as its sole goal to try to promote activities that promote our democracy. Here is what they did. They said if you go out and register people to vote, and under current law, there is a period of something like 1½ weeks to 2 weeks that you can turn in the names you have registered—no, no.

This time, what the legislature has done is said if you don't turn those new registration forms in within 48 hours, you are going to be subject to a fine and possibly a criminal penalty. And the President of the League of Women Voters of Florida, Diedre McNabb, has said, in effect, what that means is that they will not put that onus on their members of a fine and a criminal penalty and, in effect, they will stop registering people ahead of time.

What the election laws ought to do is exactly the opposite. We ought to have laws that encourage the registration of voters and try to get more people to participate. But that is not what the Florida legislature has done. It has done exactly the opposite.

I wish I could report to the Senate that was the only thing they have

done. But they did more. For four decades, Florida has had a law, in a highly mobile society, if you have moved and you go on election day to cast your vote, and your registration address is different than the address that you show, for example, where you registered to vote years ago—maybe even a year ago—but in the meantime you have moved and your documentation—say, your driver's license—shows your new address, for four decades the law of Florida has said that a voter can change their address in the polling place to update that record, showing proper identification of who they are and that their signature matches.

Not so now. The legislature of Florida has just changed the law that if your address or your name changes—what happens if you got married in the last year and now your name doesn't match your registration name, but you still want to vote? What has the legislature of Florida done? They are going to require that you not cast a ballot. You are going to have to cast a provisional ballot, and you are going to have to have your authenticity certified after the fact.

The experience with provisional ballots in the last Presidential election in Florida, in 2008, was that of the over 35,000 ballots cast, 17,000—half of them—were not counted.

Who are the people who have been operating and have benefited by that law in Florida for four decades? They have been people who have gotten married and their name has changed. They have been people in the mobile society in which we live who have moved and bought a new house or moved into a new apartment. In other words, all of us—we and our neighbors.

Who else especially might have been the reason for the legislature of Florida to change this four decades-old law? The last Presidential election, college students in Florida voted in record numbers because college students in Florida in the town of their college went down where they had their registration. Yet their identification showed their address as their parents' home, not the registration address they had registered in their college town.

That is not making it easier to vote. That is not encouraging college students to vote. That is doing exactly the opposite. That is suppressing the vote.

What I am reporting to the Senate has been widely commented on in Florida in almost every editorial page in the State of Florida, with the bottom-line conclusion of what I have just said: It is trying to suppress the vote by making it harder to vote, harder to register to vote, and harder to have one's vote counted as it was intended.

I have written the Governor, and I have asked the Governor to consider all these things. It is widely commented in the Florida press that the Governor will sign the bill, thus constricting, restricting—whatever word you want to use—the right of the peo-

ple to vote. If the Governor does sign the bill or lets it go into law without his signature, then our only other mechanism at this point, since there are 5 counties in Florida's 67 counties that are under a watch list under the civil rights legislation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965—it is my intention to encourage the Department of Justice, the Civil Rights Division, to examine this legislation with regard to the Voting Rights Act. Preparatory to that, I had sent a letter to Thomas Perez, the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, alerting him to this fact.

I have quoted in that letter several supervisors of election, both Democrats and Republicans, who have said that cutting the early voting period from 14 days to 8 will shrink poll access by 50 percent and disenfranchise a significant number of voters. That is what the supervisors of election, the elected officials in each of the counties, were telling me.

I wish to quote a Republican supervisor of election, Deborah Clark, in Pinellas County, which is the county of St. Petersburg and Clearwater, FL. This is what she said:

Not allowing address or name change changes on election day will create an undue burden on eligible voters.

She continues:

It will also result in long lines at the polls and discourage many voters from voting.

It is self-evident, and this is an assault upon our democracy that should not be tolerated. But it happened and it happened in the last week of the legislative session. I hope—I hope—there will be such an outcry that this legislative policy gets reversed.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST JOSEPH CEMPER

Mr. JOHANNES. Mr. President, I rise today to remember a fallen hero, U.S. Army SPC Joseph Cemper. Specialist Cemper was based in eastern Afghanistan, in the area east of Kabul bordering Pakistan. This area is one of the areas where the fighting in the Afghan war has been the most intense.

Specialist Cemper was serving with the 101st Special Troops Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division, one of the Army's most elite units. He and four fellow American soldiers were killed in a suicide attack that ultimately took 10 lives.

Specialist Cemper had a long desire to serve his country, and was rightfully proud of his commitment to defend and to protect.

He is mourned by his parents, three sisters, two brothers, a fiancée, and an infant son Liam. I know his family is proud of him, and will always remember his spirit, enthusiasm, competitiveness, and can-do attitude. They are the

type of American family that constitute the pillars of our Armed Forces, and are the reason our Nation remains safe from its enemies.

Joseph's father, SFC Eugene Cemper, has made service to the Army his life's work. As an Army recruiter, Sergeant Cemper had the unique experience of personally recruiting his son into the Army.

As a father and a leader, Sergeant Cemper inspired both Specialist Cemper and his younger brother, PFC Noah Cemper, to wear the uniform of an American soldier with pride.

The Cemper family laid their son to rest in Papillion, NE, on April 29, 2011. Specialist Cemper returned to his birthplace with valor and honor having been awarded both the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medals.

I know I speak for all Nebraskans, and all Americans, when I say that despite our sorrow, we are deeply honored to have him.

I cannot imagine the pain the Cemper family is suffering today. The loss unexpectedly of a son in combat is one of the most extreme trials a parent or loved one could face. I know, at this point, my words cannot ease their hurt.

So I will end this tribute by saying what Specialist Cemper held close to his heart, so close that his family has inscribed it in a scrapbook which will one day be seen by his son. It reads:

When I stand before God at the end of my life, I hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and I could say that I used everything you gave me.

I hope he rests knowing that he died the bravest and most honorable death an American could. May God bless the Cemper family, their father and son still serving in the Armed Forces, and all our fighting men and women in harm's way.

I yield the floor. 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. SESSIONS. 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.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

#### SOUTHEASTERN TORNADOES

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I want to discuss today the tragedy that has occurred in Alabama and other States across the Southeast as a result of the tornadoes that hit our region in a 24-hour period between 8 a.m. in the morning on April 27 and 8 a.m. in the morning on April 28. The National Weather Service estimates there were a total of 312 tornadoes across the

Southeast. The worst outbreak previously reported occurred in April of 1974, and that was with 148 tornadoes.

The Birmingham-Tuscaloosa F4 tornado had a path with a maximum width of 1.5 miles and a length, from the Tuscaloosa to Birmingham area, of 80 miles. It stayed on the ground almost continuously—very unusual. It went through a number of populated areas, and that tornado alone resulted in 65 deaths. Alabama's current death toll is nearing 250, with thousands injured. Frankly, after seeing the damage to the affected areas, I am amazed we did not lose more lives. As I talked to mayors and others on the ground, they said the same thing.

I talked to Mayor Gunnin in Hackleburg today. I believe he was the one who told me there were about 18 killed, and he was pleased it was that low. They were hammered with an F5, the highest, strongest tornado, which basically destroyed his whole town. All his businesses, including the distribution center for a jeans manufacturing company, have been destroyed. It is very difficult for them to pay for anything. Their businesses that pay a sales tax that goes to the city have been damaged, and he has made the point—and it is a good example—that he, in this little town of Hackleburg, had emergency funds, but they have been on massive overtime for the week since the event and other costs are arising and it is very difficult for him.

I want to thank President Obama for the quick response he made to the tragedy. The people of Alabama appreciated the fact that he, and later Cabinet members, actually visited some of the devastated areas. We appreciate the quick action in declaring Alabama and other areas major disaster areas. That does help in a lot of different ways.

I also had the opportunity to be with him in Tuscaloosa when he came there. Mrs. Obama, of course, did a beautiful job also of talking to the people who have lost so much and comforting them. Secretary Napolitano came on Sunday to the Pratt City area in Birmingham, along with several other Cabinet members. I think they also got a real appreciation for the severity of the damage and reassured Alabamians that help would be on the way in an appropriate fashion.

It is certain that it will take, for a number of our communities, an integrated, coordinated State, local, and Federal response to get these communities back on track. That is why we have a Federal Emergency Management Agency. That is why we have monies in the budget for these kinds of things, although this one is a particularly damaging event, I have to say.

As the ranking member on the Budget Committee, I am aware we have to be careful about how we spend money. We certainly don't have any money—not a dime—to waste.

I have to tell you, every time I have been there or I have talked to people

on the ground, they tell me how impressed they are with the volunteers who are arriving from all over the country, bringing food and water and helping people who are already working. They are bringing chainsaws to help clear roads and highways and driveways to people's homes. That has been real encouraging, and it makes me very proud to represent a group of people who have the integrity and the work ethic and the determination to overcome tragedy. It has been encouraging to me.

Having walked through the devastated neighborhoods less than 24 hours after the tornado, I can tell you people were stunned at the damages, at the complete loss of homes and belongings. Many of the people believed themselves lucky to be alive. Their entire roof was gone, most of the walls were gone, and yet somehow they came out with minor injuries or less severe injuries. Others, of course, did not survive, and others received severe injuries. It is always amazing to me in a tornado situation how a house can be just obliterated, and persons can come out of it with not too severe an injury, and for that they were expressing great appreciation. I think it is a reflection of the faith these individuals have in a higher being who, I think, gives them the courage to go on.

One of the things that is perfectly clear is that housing in some areas will be a critical matter. Many houses are totally destroyed—nothing but a concrete slab left. Of course, many mobile homes or manufactured homes were completely lost. They are not on a slab, so those homes have been rolled over and completely demolished or disappeared basically. So we are going to need to work in a way that FEMA has done before to provide emergency housing.

In the larger areas where there is more housing around—there is vacant housing in some of our areas—they ought to be moved promptly into that vacant housing that currently exists. In some areas there is just not housing for individuals to move into. I was told today by two mayors that they have people still in recreational areas—gyms and that kind of thing—using those as a place for shelter. We are definitely not where we need to be.

Yet some FEMA trailers are being moved into areas of the State. That may have to be done. I wish we could avoid that step, but in many areas it cannot be avoided—avoided in the sense that, to me, the best way to handle a situation where a person's home is gone is to help that person move as quickly as possible into what could be a permanent residence—either through rental or purchase. The longer that person is in a temporary residence the more likely they are also often receiving Federal assistance. As long as they are in this temporary limbo circumstance, their life is less stable, and the Federal Government is spending more money, money that could be utilized better if we can avoid spending it