

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be extended until 8:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and, further, that at 8:30 I be recognized.

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

Mr. REID. The reason we are extending morning business is the House is having trouble passing the bill, I understand, and so we are waiting until action is taken. They started at 4:30, and it is taking longer than they anticipated. As I understand, they have another caucus in which they are now engaged. It is 7 o'clock, so that is why I thought that at 8:30 we would have a better idea whether they are going to take action tonight.

Again, I would 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. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, we are here awaiting the action of the House of Representatives. We don't know whether the House is going to pass the JOHN BOEHNER proposal, but regardless of what they do, we have the solution right underneath our noses. There have been discussions today. I have had a number of discussions with our colleagues. I have had a discussion first this morning with my colleague from Florida and I have had discussions with others.

It seems to me the obvious solution, since we are now at the eleventh hour and getting close to the 59th minute of the eleventh hour, is that we take elements of the Reid proposal, the McConnell proposal, and the Boehner proposal. So I would suggest our leadership consider, regardless of what happens in the House—because the Senate is going to have to act on something to get 60 votes to meet the filibuster threshold in this Chamber and then send a package back to the House. I would suggest it be this: that we take the Reid proposal which includes the larger amount of spending cuts. Senator REID at first said that is \$2.7 trillion. Maybe it has been by CBO marked down to about \$2.2 trillion. But whatever that larger amount—clearly larger

than the Boehner proposal, even though some would argue it is the Iraq and Afghanistan war wind-down savings we would get, but whatever it is, it is larger than the House proposal—and use that as the first cut by lifting the debt ceiling. But there would be a sequence of events that would happen after that to avoid what the Senate Democrats do not want, which is that the markets and the rating agencies cause the debt instruments—the U.S. Treasury bills—to be downgraded. There needs to be certainty for those rating agencies, for the U.S. Government debt, and it could be achieved this way: We have a BRAC-like committee—that being a committee that would be composed equally of Republicans and Democrats—that would come up with a package that would then come back to each House, no amendments, for an up-or-down vote.

The fail-safe backup, in case that committee were not able to come to agreement or in the event that it came back to both Houses and one of the Houses did not pass it, that we would then have the McConnell proposal, which is that the President would request the increase of the debt and there would be this procedure that Senator MCCONNELL laid out that there would be a resolution of disapproval. If there were such a disapproval, then the President, of course, could veto it. In order for the President's veto to be overridden, there would have to be a two-thirds vote. There would not be a two-thirds vote, and, therefore, there is the assurance that we would have the raising of the debt ceiling to get us through this next year and a half.

It seems as though it is right under our nose, if the parties will just realize that now is the time we have to act to find a workable solution so we can get the votes.

If we can get, with that kind of proposal, 60 votes in the Senate, then it goes down to the House, whether they pass the Boehner proposal or not. At the eleventh hour and the 59th minute, recognizing what is at stake for the country, then the House of Representatives is going to do the right thing and they are going to pass it.

I am just a little country boy, but it seems to me sometimes we get so wrapped up in all the intricate details that the obvious solution is right there under our nose, staring us in the face. I respectfully request the Senate consider this.

I yield the floor.

CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. More than 11 million people—twice the population of my State of Maryland—are now in need of emergency assistance to survive.

Large portions of the Horn of Africa region are now in the grip of one of the worst humanitarian crises in the re-

gion in recent decades. Nearly half of the population in Somalia is in urgent need of assistance, and malnutrition rates are on the rise in neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya. Without the immediate action of the international community, it is projected that an additional 180,000 people will perish in the coming months due to the drought and famine.

It is difficult to fully comprehend the levels of human suffering currently occurring in the region, as refugees flee famine-affected areas. People are literally walking for days without food and water to try to reach food and safety. More than 166,000 desperate Somalis are estimated to have fled their country to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia in recent months—approximately 3,500 people are arriving every day at refugee camps in those countries compounding the already tenuous humanitarian situation in the region.

On July 21, the United Nations declared a famine in two regions in southern Somalia. This declaration is not done lightly and is the first declared since 1992. Famine is only declared when acute child malnutrition rates exceed 30 percent and more than 2 people per 10,000 die per day. The U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, reports that the under-5 death rates in southern Somalia are higher than 4 children per 10,000 per day in all areas and as high as 13 to 20 per 10,000 per day in areas of south central Somalia. Already, outbreaks of measles, cholera, and watery diarrhea have been reported in affected areas as well. Unless this is addressed immediately through immunization campaigns and medical treatment, more people will perish from these preventable diseases.

The United States is one of the largest donors of emergency assistance to the region, helping more than 4.4 million of those in need and providing over \$431 million since last October. The actions taken by our Nation and the international community in anticipation of the drought last year has helped save countless lives. Through the Famine Early Warning System, we saw data come in, and we were able to move resources into the region and implement programs to provide food in critically affected areas throughout the Horn of Africa. However, emergency assistance alone cannot solve the underlying long-term problems. The United States continues to provide longer term development assistance through Feed the Future and other programs, which are working in the region to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition.

USAID Administrator Shah was in Kenya last week and met with Somali refugees there. He met with a woman who had traveled for 33 days by foot with her two children and suffered a robbery along the way, in order to arrive at a refugee camp in Kenya and have access to safety, food, and basic human security. He also visited with a 4-year-old boy who, in the acute malnutrition wing of the hospital at the

camp, weighed only 19 pounds and was reliant on a nasal feeding tube and very specific feeding regimens in order to, hopefully, survive. There are countless more stories like this, of people who risked their lives to bring themselves and their families to a safe environment.

This crisis has several contributing factors—most notably the worst drought on record in 60 years, which has devastated crops and livestock. But another major contributor to this crisis is the complete lack of governance in Somalia, a failed state for more than two decades, and the ongoing conflict there and in particular, the al-Qaida-affiliated Somali militia, al-Shabaab. Since 2009, al-Shabaab has prevented most Western aid organizations from operating in their territory, and it is no coincidence that the areas of famine are areas controlled by al-Shabaab. My sincerest hope is that al-Shabaab will stand aside and allow international organizations to assist people in their territory, people essentially held hostage by this radical, Islamist group.

The U.N. estimates that an additional \$300 million will be needed just in the next few months to help those affected by this humanitarian disaster and that approximately \$1.8 billion will be needed to fully address the massive scope of this crisis and help the people in the Horn of Africa. Without this crucially important funding, nearly 200,000 people could die. To date, this appeal is less than half way met by the international community. The international community must do more to meet this appeal.

This situation is a clear example of the critical importance of maintaining a strong U.S. commitment to emergency food assistance. The House of Representatives passed a fiscal year 2012 Agriculture appropriations bill that would cut funding for emergency food assistance by 75 percent from just 3 years ago. This comes at a time when not only is there famine in the Horn of Africa, but around the world needs are increasing as food prices remain high and the number of people affected or displaced by natural disasters and conflict continues to increase.

The international disaster assistance level specified in the House State-Foreign Ops appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012 would result in emergency humanitarian programming reaching 19 million fewer disaster-affected people than it would if the account were appropriated at the fiscal year 2011 level, based on average costs per person by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID between 2006 and 2009.

If we cut the migration and refugee assistance and emergency refugee and migration accounts, as the House Foreign Operations bill does, we would jeopardize U.S. support for many of the world's 48 million forcibly displaced people, the majority of whom are assisted and protected by the international community. This includes al-

most 1 million Somalis. Before the current crisis in the Horn, 725,000 Somalis were seeking refuge in the region. Since the onset of the current crisis, 100,000 Somalis have arrived in Kenya and 75,000 in Ethiopia. Obviously, cuts of that magnitude would lead to catastrophic consequences. This could affect millions; primarily women and children suffering from hunger as a result of conflict and natural disasters would lose access to lifesaving food. This would significantly reduce America's ability to address instability in volatile countries and decrease its capacity to respond quickly to the needs of hungry people affected by conflict and natural disasters.

Aside from the national security implications for the United States in this already unstable region, the U.S. Government has a moral responsibility to help the least fortunate, both at home and abroad. As a global leader, the United States should not shy away from helping the least fortunate, regardless of race, religion, or nationality. In addition, the United States should encourage greater international participation. It is the moral, human course of action to take, but it is also the smart thing to do: a more stable and prosperous Somalia keeps the rest of the world and the United States more secure as well.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, today I join Senator MIKE JOHANNIS and Congressman ADRIAN SMITH of Nebraska in paying tribute to the National Park Service, which will be celebrating its 95th anniversary this year on August 25, 2011.

The National Park Service currently administers 394 units across 49 States and U.S. territories, including five National Park Service units in our home State of Nebraska. These units consist of the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, Homestead National Monument of America, Missouri National Recreational River, Niobrara National Scenic River, and Scotts Bluff National Monument. In addition, the National Park Service administers five National Historic Trails, including the California, Oregon, Pony Express, Mormon, and Lewis and Clark.

National Park areas generate \$12 billion in tourism dollars to local economies, creating 247,000 private-sector jobs. Within Nebraska, National Park Service units generate approximately 8.8 million in tourism dollars and create approximately 170 private-sector jobs. And in western Nebraska, Agate Fossil Beds and Scotts Bluff monuments, along with the Chimney Rock National Historic Site, which is an affiliated area of the National Park Service, generate close to \$3 million in tourism dollars and create 90 private-sector jobs.

Nebraska has been supportive of the mission of the National Park Service even before the agency existed. In fact,

in 1914, 2 years before the National Park Service was created, citizens in the Scottsbluff/Gering area sought to get a National Park or Monument established. Prominent local champions included elected officials and newspaper editor, A.B. Wood.

Scotts Bluff National Monument is named for a fur trapper by the name of Hiram Scott who was wounded and deserted by his companions in 1828. He gained immortality by making his way to a magnificent formation of bluffs along the North Platte River before succumbing to his wounds. It was for Hiram Scott that Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, and the city of Scottsbluff have been named.

Scotts Bluff National Monument, which rises 4,649 feet above sea level, was an imposing landmark which guided wagon trains along the California, Oregon, Pony Express, and Mormon Trails. Native Americans originally called this natural formation *ma-a-pate*, which translates into "hill that is hard to go around."

The Summit Road to the top of the bluff was completed in 1937, allowing visitors to drive to experience the spectacular view of the valley 800 feet below. This road is the oldest existing concrete road in Nebraska and includes the only three automobile tunnels in our State.

In the Scottsbluff/Gering area, numerous events to commemorate the 95th anniversary of the National Park Service have been scheduled for August 2011, beginning with a Kick-Off Ceremony at Scotts Bluff National Monument on August 12, 2011. Platte Valley Attractions, a coalition of visitor venues in and around the area, is hosting a variety of events and special exhibits through grants and donations from local and regional sponsors to commemorate the theme, "Westward Expansion as seen through National Parks," including: Farm and Ranch Museum is hosting westward expansion orientation films and an interactive exhibit of westward expansion transportation methods.

Midwest Theater is hosting both the premiere of a new documentary film on the Pony Express and a film by Ken Burns on America's National Parks.

North Platte Valley Museum is hosting a westward expansion map exhibit.

Western Nebraska Community College is hosting a seminar, "Recognizing and Preserving Westward Expansion," with speakers who are all nationally recognized in their fields.

Western Nebraska Community College sponsored a summer youth camp that developed posters to help promote these commemorative events.

Again, on behalf of the people of Nebraska, we offer our congratulations to Scotts Bluff National Monument on its Kick-Off Ceremony and the National Park Service on its 95th anniversary.