

their lifesavings and pursue their dream. So they opened a business out of the spare bedroom of their home; they opened a business out of a corner in their garage; and nowadays you can start a business with a laptop and an empty table at a Starbucks, and it works. We have to get back to that.

What stands in the way of that are three things, above everything else. The first is a Tax Code that is crazy. It is not complicated, it is not burdensome, it is crazy. It is the craziest thing you have ever seen in your life. First of all, it is full of loopholes and exemptions built in. That doesn't hurt the big guys. It doesn't hurt billionnaires and millionnaires and big corporations. These guys can handle this stuff. They may not like it, but they can hire lawyers, accountants, and lobbyists. They can figure this stuff out. You know who a complicated Tax Code kills? The guy or gal trying to start a business out of the spare bedroom of their home. We have to simplify our Tax Code. It has to be reformed. If there is stuff in it that is the result of good lobbying as opposed to good policy, take it out. I hope we will work on that. Everybody here says they are for tax reform, so do it. Let's have urgency. Let's have some urgency behind that.

The second is regulations. Look, we need to have regulations. Here is a glass of water. I don't want this to have poison in it. I want our air to be clean. Government has a role to play in those things. Let me tell you what happens when regulations go too far, when they seem to exist only for the purpose of justifying the existence of a regulator. You don't hurt the guys who have made it; you don't hurt the big corporations or the billionnaires. These guys can hire lawyers to deal with that stuff, and they can hire lobbyists to change all that stuff. It kills the people trying to start a business out of the spare bedroom of their home. So we have to simplify the regulatory system we have in this country as well.

Finally, this debt. The debt is a problem. There is no plan in place to do anything about it. People are afraid, concerned, worried—and rightfully so—about investing money in an economy that doesn't have a plan to pay its bills. I hope we reverse course on all of these issues. If we do, it will lead to prosperity.

Let me tell you what prosperity will lead to. It will lead to more jobs, more jobs will lead to more taxpayers, more taxpayers will lead to more revenue, and more revenue means we will have money to pay down our debt and do what government should do, such as our national defense, invest in infrastructure and in our people, and provide a safety net to help those who cannot help themselves.

To do that, it all starts with embracing the fundamental principle of America's prosperity. We have never been a nation of haves and have-nots. We are a nation of haves and soon-to-haves, of

people who have made it and people who will make it. That is who we need to remain if we desire to provide our children with what we had, an American century, which is what the 21st century can be, should be, and will be. If in 2012 this body and our leadership reverse course from the direction we are headed, it will place us on a path that is true to our heritage as a people and embrace for our children and grandchildren a future they deserve, a prosperous and growing America where all things are possible, where anyone from anywhere can accomplish anything, where the son of a bartender and a maid can be a U.S. Senator, and where anyone watching, no matter where you start out in life, can accomplish and be anything you want to accomplish if you are willing to work hard, play by the rules and have the ability to do it.

With that, I want to wish all of my colleagues and the people of Florida and the people of the United States a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah, and a happy New Year. May God always bless our country and may 2012 bring us the safety and prosperity for our Nation and for the world.

I thank the Chair.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

DISASTERS IN 2011

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I will take the opportunity while the floor is relatively quiet to come and explain one of the votes we are going to be asked to cast tomorrow. In fact, it is very timely that I am here on the Senate floor at 2 o'clock in the afternoon because the House, I understand, just passed H. Con. Res. 94, and I am going to ask the Senate to reject that resolution when it comes here tomorrow for our vote. I am asking Democrats and Republicans to join with me in voting no on that resolution. I would like to take a few minutes to explain why. I think pictures are worth a thousand words, so let me just use four to save time.

This is about disasters in 2011. This whole issue is about how we should budget for disasters. It is an important debate that has been one of the many debates Congress has had over this last year, and we are wrapping up that debate in the next 48 hours. So this is a part of that debate.

I think pictures speak louder than words. This is a picture of Joplin, MO, a town that was virtually wrecked by a

massive and monster tornado and tornadoes.

This is a picture of the Mississippi River flooding in Cairo, IL. This year, the Mississippi River was at one of its highest levels in some places in over a century. We received our own share of that flooding in Louisiana, which sits at the base of this great Mississippi River basin. So our people, as well as people along the entire Mississippi River Valley, experienced unprecedented flooding.

The lonely and distraught couple sitting in what looks like the middle of an ocean is actually in Nags Head, NC. This is what happened to their beach home as water virtually surrounded them and destroyed that community. Again, this happened this year with Hurricane Irene.

Down here on the far right is a picture of the fires that raged and devastated parts of Texas, which experienced one of the worst droughts in the recorded history of Texas.

What is sad about this debate is I could show picture after picture after picture of communities in our country devastated by tornadoes, fires, hurricanes—disasters that strike without warning and whose impact is virtually impossible to measure until months afterward because of the extraordinary damage. In fact, the Weather Service just this month did a recalculation of 2011 and declared it to be one of the worst disaster years since records have been kept, saying they have now concluded, as enough evidence has come in, that we had over 12 disasters in 1 year—in this year of 2011—over \$1 billion each.

So this year was a real outlier, but sadly—and the Presiding Officer has heard it in his State, and we have heard it in my State of Louisiana, and we have heard it around the world—these pictures may not be an aberration. These pictures may show what is to come. And while 2011 was a very bad year, people are starting to think that as a result of the changes in temperature and climate change—and whatever people think the reasons are for that, no one should disagree with the consequences of changing temperature, which are violent weather episodes. The question is, What are we going to do about it and what is the right way to move forward? Let me show my colleagues what the wrong way is before I explain the right way.

This picture depicts the wrong way to respond. This has been suggested by some of my Republican colleagues. They suggest that when the water rises on your home or when the tornado rips you out of your bed and the roof falls on you and your family or when the river water rises and you look out of your second-floor window over your 100- or 200-acre farm and you can't see anything and your cows are swimming and your horses are swimming as well, that what you should do is climb on your roof, call Washington, call the hotline, and identify the offset in the

Federal budget to provide the cost of your rescue. It is laughable. It is supposed to be funny. It is a funny cartoon. But when we think about it, it is really not funny to tell the American people that in order to be rescued, you need to call the budget office of the Federal Government, identify an offset, and then we will send a rescue unit to respond to your emergency. It is not funny. The American people aren't laughing.

So I am going to ask my colleagues to vote no on H. Con. Res. 94 tomorrow because that is exactly what H. Con. Res. 94 does. I should get a big pen and write, "If you think that grandma here with a cat and the phone is what you want your constituents to look like, then you just go right on and vote for H. Con. Res. 94."

But I am not going to vote for that concurrent resolution because our leaders wisely—both Republican and Democratic leaders, wisely—in August, in anticipation of this issue, already provided for disaster funding in the Budget Control Act. They already provided for it. We don't have to tell our constituents that before we can send money to help them in Joplin or in Nags Head, NC, or Cairo, IL, or San Antonio or Dallas, TX, they have to identify an offset, because we wisely said within the Budget Control Act, within our efforts to close the budget gap, that we are providing for disaster funding, and that is what we have done. But some Members of the House will continue to want to adhere to trying to identify an offset before disasters can be responded to. They say things such as, we should pay for disasters in the year we respond to them.

I am going to present a chart in just a minute, but first I want to try to explain the second reason this is a faulty way forward.

In 2005, which wasn't that many years ago, the Federal Government allocated \$45 billion—actually, I think this number is about \$68 billion, and I will show the chart in a minute—in 1 year, and that year was the year of Katrina and Rita, which were the No. 1 and No. 3 most violent and disastrous and costly hurricanes in the history of our country. They happened in the same year to the same State—or to the same area, which was Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. We got the brunt of two of the worst storms that literally flooded a metropolitan area or flooded an area greater than the size of Great Britain. And that amount was \$68 billion.

If we followed the poor logic of some on the Republican side that we had to pay for this disaster in that year in the budget, I think we would have probably had to eliminate half of the discretionary budget of the United States of America. I am going to get that exact number. But it is ludicrous to think we would be able to find \$68 billion in the budget in that one year. In fact, the whole homeland security budget—it wouldn't be half—the whole homeland

security budget is \$42 billion. So let me repeat: Instead of half, we would have had to completely eliminate the entire homeland security budget of the United States of America, plus another couple of smaller budgets, to meet the \$68 billion requirement. It doesn't make any sense, and it is not right. It is not the right way to budget. It violates the Budget Control Act, and it is so hypocritical that some on the other side are requiring this for domestic expenses when they don't require the same thing for foreign expenses or international expenses.

I would like to put up the next chart. To pour salt on the wound—and I don't quite understand the politics. I don't understand the math. I don't understand the budgetary consequences, and I don't understand the politics. They are wrong on all three counts because this is what those who voted for H. Con. Res. 94 have to go home and explain to their constituents. They are going to have to go home and say: When I was in Congress, I allocated \$823 billion for the war in Iraq and required no pay-for. Then I went back to Congress and spent \$557 billion in Afghanistan and didn't say a word about that. Then I went back and added a Medicare drug benefit for \$180 billion, and we didn't pay for that. Then I went back and sent checks to everyone when George Bush was the President, and those checks cost \$124 billion, and we didn't require any offset or budget implication for that. But when Americans had their homes destroyed, their farms flooded, their businesses ruined by disasters, I can't send a dime unless we take it out of health, transportation, or education.

So they said no to this little \$8.1 billion—after spending a grand total of \$1.68 trillion on all these items. So I do not understand the math. I do not understand their position as to the budget. I most certainly do not understand the politics, and I do not agree with it because I think the American people should come first. Their needs from disasters should come first. We cannot possibly, because of the erratic nature of disasters themselves—we might think we are powerful in the Senate, but we are not more powerful than God, and we are not more powerful than nature; and I am not saying that God causes these storms, but nature has a way—we are not that powerful and we do not know and cannot predict when these will happen. All we can do is respond.

We have responded appropriately in the Senate version of this bill. Our bill will provide funding for FEMA, for the Corps of Engineers, within the budgetary control structure. It will allow us to pay for this over time in future negotiations, which is the wise way to do it. But it will not force us to use disasters that occur in this country as an excuse to continue to ring out costs from health, transportation, and education.

As my colleagues know, I feel very strongly about this issue, and I am

proud to say I think many Democrats and, hopefully, some Republicans feel strongly that their constituents at home should come first, that the budget should provide for an immediate response when people are victims of floods or tornadoes or hurricanes or other disasters.

I think most people in the Senate understand 2011 was a tough year. It was a historic year. But the sad thing is, I think we also understand it could repeat itself. Using these disasters, when it was not the case for the war in Iraq, was not the case for the war in Afghanistan, was not the case for Medicare, was not the case for the rebate checks—but when it comes to disasters we cannot seem to find \$8.1 billion within the budget control structure. I do not, as I said, understand it.

We have seen this cartoon I have in the Chamber before. I will not go into it. But I think it says beautifully why this is the wrong approach. Again, these pictures speak a thousand words. This other chart shows what a disaster looks like. I wish I had something to show what it feels like to lose everything, and then, when you have lost everything, trying to provide confidence to your own family, to your own children, and to your neighbors, to then listen to the debate in Congress that says: We write a blank check to Iraq, a blank check to Afghanistan, a blank check here, and yet, when it comes to funding for disasters, we have to have this argument.

I am going to ask my colleagues to vote no on H. Con. Res. 94 tomorrow. In voting no, we will reject to the find-the-offset-now requirement. We will honor the agreement made between Republican and Democratic leaders back in August to include this in the Budget Control Act. We will send a powerful signal to our constituents that they come first; that disaster victims should come first in the budget, not last; that we understand how difficult it is for them to rebuild their communities, and the Federal Government wants to be and will be a reliable partner they can depend on in their time of need.

With this ill-advised resolution, we return to an issue that consumed this Chamber for weeks this past fall.

That issue is how we pay for disaster funding—money used by communities destroyed by disasters that are struggling to clean up, rebuild, and move on with their lives after a tragic act of Mother Nature.

We have seen many such events over the past few years—from historic floods in the Midwest, to deadly tornadoes in the South, to the wreckage inflicted on a huge swath of the country earlier this year by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

Back in September, Republicans in the House stood in the way of this critical recovery money, arguing that no funds should be sent to disaster victims until Congress had figured out how to pay for it through other cuts.

That is bad enough on its face. But what made it even more ridiculous is

that this Congress had already agreed on a method for funding disasters. That agreement came over the summer when we passed the Budget Control Act—a measure that received significant support from Democrats and Republicans in both Chambers of Congress.

That act included two contingency funds—funds that could be spent above and beyond the established cap on Federal spending. One of those funds was for overseas contingencies like the wars and rebuilding in Iraq and Afghanistan that allows for \$126 billion in spending above the cap. The other was for disaster relief and included an \$11.3 billion cap adjustment for additional spending beyond the regular level.

We made this agreement because we recognized that there is a real cost associated with disaster recovery—a cost that can't always be anticipated because natural disasters, by their very nature, are highly unpredictable.

The stand-alone disaster funding bill we consider today, when combined with the minibus passed last month, will account for \$10.4 billion of that \$11.3 billion disaster funding cap—an amount completely within the requirements laid out in the bipartisan Budget Control Act.

But now, House Republicans are once again trying to go back on that agreement by requiring that agreed-upon funding be offset with additional across-the-board cuts to discretionary spending.

There are two reasons this is wrong-headed.

Reason No. 1: The House Republicans are creating a double standard regarding offsets—one for defense spending and another for domestic disaster relief.

That is because, in this proposal, they only require an additional offset for domestic disaster spending. They have sent over no such language for the additional funding provided in the bill we just voted on for overseas contingencies.

Let's get to the heart of what that means. It means that House Republicans are saying: No, we don't have to pay for wars in places like Afghanistan or Iraq. But we do have to offset spending for domestic disaster recovery.

Why is that? Why is it that the House Republicans say we are able to rebuild Iraq or Afghanistan without a single word of protest, but we won't rebuild Vermont or New Jersey or Missouri or Louisiana in a similar way?

The omnibus bill has \$126 billion in it for the costs of the wars. If we followed the same pay-for standard that the House Republicans are insisting on for disaster relief on the costs of the war, we would have to impose a 24-percent across-the-board cut on the Defense budget or a 12-percent cut on the entire discretionary budget.

This double standard makes no sense. I remind my colleagues that when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the gulf coast, it required appropriations of more than \$62 billion in fiscal year 2005

alone. If we applied the House Republican requirement to pay for a disaster of a similar size, we would have to cut domestic spending by 12 percent.

During the 112th Congress, we have not cut defense. We have not increased taxes on individuals who make more than \$1 million a year. But the House Republicans want to keep going back to this one small part of the budget to find savings.

So, let's be clear. Here is what the Republicans do not require payment for: Iraq war, \$823 billion; Afghanistan war, \$557 billion; Medicare drug benefit, \$180 billion; and Bush rebate checks, \$124 billion.

Now, you ask, what do they require payment for? Community disaster relief, \$8.1 billion.

Reason No. 2 of why the House Republicans' plan should be firmly rejected: The House Republicans' plan wouldn't require true across-the-board cuts to pay for disaster spending. It would only require cuts to domestic discretionary spending—a portion of the government that makes up only 14 percent of total expenditures.

In April, we cut domestic discretionary spending for fiscal year 2011 by 7 percent. And the omnibus legislation before the Senate, consistent with the Budget Control Act, cuts it by an additional 1 percent.

This proposal—the one we are currently considering—would pile on to that by cutting another 1.8 percent to domestic programs.

I think we need to be clear about exactly what this would mean. There are consequences to these cuts—real consequences that the American people would feel immediately.

Among them, it means that Title I education funding would be cut by \$265 million. That means that almost 1,000 schools serving more than 350,000 disadvantaged students could lose funding, and about 3,700 teachers and aides could lose their jobs.

It means that special education funding would be cut by \$199 million. That could lead to the loss of 2,600 education staff serving special needs students.

It means a \$146 million cut to Head Start funding, which would eliminate 11,000 low-income students and their families from this critical program.

It would mean a reduction of 400 Border Patrol agents—nearly half the number that we hired and trained since Congress enacted the border security supplemental 16 months ago.

It would mean that 161,000 fewer women, infants, and children would receive food assistance under the WIC program.

It would hurt our efforts to combat terrorism and crime, with more than 5,500 Department of Justice positions becoming vacant through a hiring freeze and furloughs.

It would mean a cut to the IRS enforcement mission, resulting in lost revenues of approximately \$4 billion annually. That would increase the deficit by at least six times the magnitude of the proposed reduction.

It would mean a \$15 million cut to the senior nutrition program, which means 2 million fewer meals to needy seniors.

The House Republicans would like you to think that these cuts are nothing more than reducing bureaucracy. I beg to differ. These cuts have consequences in the everyday lives of Americans across our Nation.

Here is the bottom line: Instead of being really serious about closing the budget gap and putting new revenues on the table or saying across-the-board cuts for everything, House Republicans continue to use everything, even disasters that strike home, as an excuse to cut health, education, and transportation.

Well, I stand here today and say to them: Enough is enough.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution. This Congress made an agreement months ago on how to fund unanticipated disasters. We should stick with that agreement.

There are times and there are places for politics. Aid for disaster victims is not one of them. Victims of natural disasters should not be victimized twice—first by Mother Nature and then by politics in Washington.

There may be another expression of a different side of this argument. I have not heard a good one yet. But I look forward—if any of my colleagues want to come down and take the opposite side of this argument, I am around. I am not going anywhere. I will be here today. I will be here tomorrow. I will be happy to debate them on the floor on this subject. But as the chair of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I have to take a strong stand on this issue because our budget is the one that basically gets called on to fund these disasters.

Again, if I have to follow the requirement to fund them in the year the money is spent—1 year—I am going to have to come to this floor and tell everyone: We are not going to have a homeland security bill this year because we just had a category 5 strike Miami, and the bill—as they said last night on the Weather Channel—will exceed \$40 billion. So I am going to have to give up our whole bill, and we will have no security for the United States to pay for the disaster in 1 year.

This is the chart I wanted to show. This is how erratic funding can be, as shown on this chart. This shows funding from 2003 to 2012. In 2003, we spent basically a little over \$1.7 billion. Then it jumped up to a little over \$6 billion. Then, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma—which was in Florida—moved us all the way up to \$45 billion in 2005, and then we fell back again to about \$7.8 billion. We can see the erratic nature of these storms. It is impossible for us to even get a good average. So the only thing we can do is put a baseline in our bill, and then if disaster strikes, to respond and put it in the Budget Control Act over our 302(b) allocations.

If we do not do it that way, we are going to end up having to scramble

every year to quickly calculate what the disasters were last year and jam it against some budget. It is either going to be education that gets gutted or health that gets gutted or agriculture that gets gutted or homeland security. I do not want to have to be the one to call the thousands of Border Patrol agents whom I have helped to fund in my budget or have to call Senator JOHN MCCAIN or Senator KYL and say: I am sorry. We have to lay off all the Border Patrol agents along the border in Arizona for a year or two because we had a big storm in Miami, and I have to send the money to Miami.

Whoever heard of such a thing. That is what the Republicans in the House have sent to us. It should be rejected on its face. There is a better way to move forward, and the way is in the Budget Control Act that our leaders wisely have already agreed to.

So we will have this vote tomorrow. Again, I think I have raised three excellent points about why the House approach is wrong and why our approach is correct. If someone wants to come and debate it, I will be happy to maybe try to explain it a little bit more.

I can understand some on the other side who say: We have to find a way to pay for it, even if we have already negotiated, et cetera, but when the other side refuses to put even a new penny on the table to help with some of these things, it makes it even harder to achieve what we are trying to achieve.

I thank the Presiding Officer. I hope my colleagues will hear these arguments and let me know if there is anything further we can explain on it. But I think the picture says a thousand words.

I will close with this again: No American should have to sit on their roof, while the water rises, and identify an offset to finance their own rescue. We are a stronger nation than that. We are a bigger nation than that. We most certainly can provide the funding for FEMA, for the Corps of Engineers, and other funding in the way our Budget Control Act stipulates in this budget.

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.

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

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

LIHEAP FUNDING

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here to urge that my colleagues in Congress and the Obama administration provide the funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program or LIHEAP. As you know, in Connecticut, LIHEAP provides immediate critical heating assistance for families and seniors in need during these freezing cold winter months.

Last year, more than 45,000 New Hampshire households received LIHEAP funds. That is more than 106,000 individuals. But unfortunately this year, many of those families have been on waiting lists. Funding for the program has been in limbo at a time when temperatures are dropping.

The Department of Health and Human Services here in Washington has released \$1.7 billion, but so much more is needed. Making matters worse, the Energy Information Administration projects a 10-percent increase in the price of heating oil this winter. That is the highest average winter price ever predicted.

In New Hampshire, more than half our homes rely on home heating oil. It is one of the highest percentages in the country, and the number of families who need assistance is growing every day. State offices are being forced to change eligibility levels for funding as they grapple with uncertainty over future funds.

There are two things that can be done in order to immediately address this situation before it escalates into an even more serious crisis. First, Congress needs to pass an Omnibus appropriations bill as soon as possible. I am very pleased to see the positive progress on this issue; that there has been an agreement announced on an Omnibus appropriations measure.

Hopefully, we are on track to pass that bill either today or tomorrow. The omnibus includes nearly \$3.5 billion in funding for LIHEAP. But we need to get that money out the door. Once Congress has spoken, is that the administration needs to release additional LIHEAP funds as quickly as possible.

The \$1.7 billion that has already been released is not enough. But the knowledge that additional LIHEAP funds are pending in the omnibus bill we are about to pass should give President Obama the assurance he needs to release more money. I hope once the budget is passed the administration will release these additional funds as soon as possible, because at this holiday season, what better gift could we provide to those families in need than to make sure they have the funds to keep their houses warm this season.

I know it is difficult to argue for more funding these days because of our deficit. Its challenges are clear. In fact, in the Senate, we have already voted, and I was one of those votes, for more than \$1 trillion in cuts to Federal spending this year.

I have continued to call for a comprehensive, balanced, bipartisan plan that looks at both revenue flows and spending. I have been part of the working group, a bipartisan working group, that now has over 40 Senators calling for a \$4 trillion deficit reduction proposal over the next 10 years. But when we cut our budget, we need to look at wasteful spending, at duplicative programs, and at subsidies to industries that no longer need our help.

LIHEAP energy assistance for low-income families does not fall under any

of those categories. It is not a frivolous program. It is a program that ensures that vulnerable citizens in New Hampshire and across this country are not forgotten and left in the cold this winter.

I have been hearing from people across New Hampshire about the difficulties they are going to face if this funding is not available and available soon. I wish to just share one of those stories. It is the story of Kim Brandolini of Nashua. In 2010, Kim suffered a series of strokes that left her disabled and unable to work. LIHEAP funds covered nearly all her monthly fuel costs last year.

But this year, because of the cuts, she is on the waiting list. She does not know how she is going to pay to heat her home. She already owes the oil company \$600, and last year she had to pay \$6,000 to replace a broken boiler. Kim is only 44 years old. She is raising a son all by herself. Previously, she served for 14 years in the Army Reserve. Kim does not deserve to be in this situation.

In Nashua, which is one of the warmest parts of New Hampshire, the average nightly low is below freezing for nearly half the year.

If we don't find a way to fund LIHEAP now, Kim and thousands like her will have no way to keep their families safe and warm. We need to act, and we need to act quickly. Already, the delay in funding LIHEAP has prevented States such as New Hampshire from taking advantage of more affordable bulk purchases of home heating oil. The bottom line is, now that we have a budget agreement, we need to release additional funds so that thousands of New Hampshire families stay warm and don't have to make impossible choices between their basic needs this winter. We can't leave families such as Kim Brandolini's out in the cold this winter. I hope we can get this budget passed as soon as possible and that the Obama administration will release additional LIHEAP funds before Christmas and the end of the year.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would like to address the Senate on the subject of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which has been reported to be part of the proposed package that would contain the extension of the payroll tax holiday and the expiring unemployment insurance benefits.