

has been flooded, causing extreme damage to the people in the area. It is just another example of what we have been through.

If we freeze the money for disaster relief, as some have suggested, it would mean the repairs being made to recover from floods and storms from April and May will not be reimbursed. From Metropolis, IL, and southern Illinois, they are facing damage there that needs to be repaired—the city of Carmi as well.

On Friday, President Obama requested \$5 billion in new disaster funding, \$500 million in supplemental money for fiscal year 2011. The President recognizes 2011 has been an exceptional year for natural disasters and that the recovery from Hurricane Irene alone could tax FEMA beyond what it is capable of providing.

This money is desperately needed for the families and businesses trying to clean up and put themselves back on track. I strongly support the supplemental appropriations for the disaster relief fund. Let's help our fellow Americans get back on their feet.

Madam President, 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. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT PATRICK HAMBURGER

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I rise today to honor a fallen hero, Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Patrick Hamburger, a native of Lincoln who later settled in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Staff Sergeant Hamburger served his country as a flight engineer while mobilized with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company B, 2nd Battalion 135th General Support Aviation, based in Grand Island. Staff Sergeant Hamburger and 29 fellow soldiers paid the ultimate price in support of Operation Enduring Freedom on August 6, 2011. He was the crew chief on the Chinook helicopter downed by enemy fire in Afghanistan. It is through extraordinary sacrifices such as his that we are able to enjoy the freedoms we have today.

Staff Sergeant Hamburger's unflinching devotion to duty and pride in his country went beyond the time he spent in uniform. Patrick lived to help others. From his childhood in Lincoln, to mentoring fellow soldiers, those who knew him recall that he was always looking out for others. Patrick's brother Chris remembers his kind spirit by stating:

He didn't worry about himself half as much as he worried about everyone else. You could have been a complete stranger and if he

could have helped you, he would have done it.

Thirteen years ago, that mentality and sense of patriotism led a young high school senior to take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the State of Nebraska against all enemies, foreign and domestic. That oath brought opportunities for Staff Sergeant Hamburger to share his mechanical talent with his fellow soldiers.

Those closest to him will tell us his pride and joy were his family, his friends, and the "V-Day Express," the Chinook helicopter he maintained. He loved being a soldier, and he took great pride in his service.

The decorations and badges earned during his 13 years of distinguished service speak to his dedication and to his skill: the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal (4th Award), the National Defense Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal (with 10 year device), Armed Forces Reserve Medal (with Mobilization Device), the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge, the Senior Aviation Badge, the Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Ribbon (with M device), the Nebraska National Guard Emergency Service Medal, the Nebraska National Guard Service Medal (10 year device), and the California National Guard Commendation Medal.

These medals, as well as Sergeant Hamburger's willingness to serve others in need, speak clearly to his commitment to upholding the values and ideals that all Nebraskans hold dear. We are proud of his character and the ways in which he represented Nebraska. I am confident that in the coming months, Nebraskans will surround and uplift his family and friends as they mourn the loss of a truly remarkable son, brother, and friend.

Today, as we bow our heads with the Hamburger family, I ask that God protect our servicemembers, both here and overseas.

We are truly grateful for the service and sacrifice made by those in uniform and their families.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Vermont.

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

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

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

#### APPROVING THE RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) approving the renewal of the import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### DESTRUCTION FROM HURRICANE IRENE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have spoken to so many of my colleagues—I know I have with my good friend, a distinguished Member of this body, the Senator from Montana, and others—about what has happened in Vermont. We are a little State. We are 660,000 people. We are a State that has sent volunteers all over the country where people have been hit by earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding, but now Vermont has been hit.

I was born in Vermont. My family came to Vermont in the 1800s. The only thing that could even begin to match what we have seen were the horrible floods of 1927. I was not alive then, but I remember the stories my parents told me. Certainly in my lifetime we have never seen anything like this. Vermont continues to grapple with the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene. It does not make a difference if you are a Republican or a Democrat, all Vermonters are joined together to rebuild after this disaster.

I wish to call the Senate's attention today to the severe and extensive damage done to our State's transportation infrastructure and to how the washed out roads and bridges are affecting the lives of all Vermonters.

Here are a few of the scenes of the destruction. This was a main highway. You can see one lane here. Look what happened. The road does not begin to pick up again until we get over here. That was a highway that had been used for decades. It is Route 100, south of Plymouth.

Plymouth, VT, is where Calvin Coolidge was born. He was spending time there with his father when he got news that he had suddenly become President and was sworn in by his father, who was the justice of the peace. The deputy sheriff thought they may need security so he stood there with a pitchfork in one hand and a lantern in the other.

But this photo shows you what has happened. They tried to build a temporary bridge up there. As you know, being from a northern State, Mr. President, we are going to have snow in Vermont in a matter of weeks and, of course, companies stop making asphalt in early November.

This is a photo I took of U.S. Route 4. I took it from a helicopter when Governor Shumlin and I toured the State

immediately after Irene. It is a major east-west route across Vermont. Again, look at this. We can't see one of the lanes of the road. It would have gone just like this, but it is gone, and look how deep it is. That is because this river moved from where it had never been before and tore it out.

Governor Shumlin, the Governor of our State, General Michael Dubie, the head of our National Guard, and I toured the damage around Vermont by helicopter immediately after the storm. We actually needed the helicopter because many of the places we went were unreachable on the ground.

This third one is the New England Central Rail Line in central Vermont that hosts Amtrak's Vermonter train. One can actually get on the Vermonter here in Washington and take it to New York and go up through New England to Vermont, which I have done a number of times. Economic Recovery Act funds had just repaired this line to nearly mint condition. Look at it now. We couldn't take a train across it. It has sunk out from underneath the track. That is a pretty horrific situation.

This shot was taken along Vermont Route 30 in Jamaica, VT, or what is left of it. This is while rains from the remnants of Hurricane Lee fell on Vermont. We just got hit and hit and hit up there. We can see work crews trying desperately to stay ahead of the rising water and some of them, frankly, risking their lives to do that.

I might say, in that regard, we have had people come in to help out. I told the two Senators from Maine yesterday, we had highway construction people from Maine—crews, some on vacation—who came down and helped. In response, when we thanked them, they said: You helped us; we will help you. The Presiding Officer knows rural America. He knows we pitch in to try to help each other.

Unfortunately, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Roads, bridges, and rail lines all over the State have been wiped out. I apologize to my colleagues for being emotional, but this is my State. This is my home. It is the home of my ancestors. We have seen flooding close more than 300 town and State roads and damage more than 30 bridges, stranding people in more than one dozen towns for days. Damage to the State's Federal aid roads and bridges will exceed \$½ billion in our little State. It is going to take years and years to recover.

It has been extremely difficult to move emergency supplies and building materials around. Some of the washed-out roads have gaping gullies in the middle that are 30 feet or more deep. One can't drive a truck over that. Some of the reopened roads and bridges are not yet recommended for heavy traffic.

The consequences have been harsh. Residents are forced to make a 30-mile-plus detour to the nearest grocery store or doctor on mountain roads,

many of them dirt roads. Businesses are struggling to reopen, rehire their people, and then to find new customers. Schools have been forced to remain closed until repairs are made, and children are wondering—adding to the trauma of what they have seen—when they are going back to the normalcy of going to school. Tourists are worrying about traveling to Vermont this fall to see the foliage or this winter to do some skiing. These are major industries in our State.

The end of construction season in Vermont is fast approaching. As I mentioned earlier, by November, it will be too cold to lay asphalt. By December, snow and ice will cover the mountains, leaving many towns dangerously isolated. My home was safe, but I live on a dead-end dirt road. It is 2 miles to the nearest paved road. I know how easily these dirt roads can be disrupted.

I applaud the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont National Guard—along with the work crews and Guardsmen from States all around the country—because they are moving quickly to make emergency road repairs and install temporary bridges. Governor Shumlin, General Dubie, and I had to helicopter into one town because it was the only way to get there. At least now it has a temporary road. But these are lifelines to the hardest hit communities. We need to make more permanent repairs as soon as possible or future rains and the fall's freeze-thaw cycle will further deterioration of our roads and make them all but impassable in the winter and cut off major parts of my State.

Given the breadth and depth of Irene's destruction, on top of the disasters already declared in all 50 States, we have to ensure that FEMA and the Department of Transportation have all the resources they need to help our citizens in their desperate time of need.

The other night the President addressed the Congress and the Nation from the floor of the House of Representatives. On his way in, he leaned over and said to me: I am thinking of your people in Vermont. That means a lot. I applaud him for issuing the emergency declaration very quickly and then making adjustments when we needed them.

We have to replenish the FEMA disaster relief fund and the Federal highway emergency road fund, both of which are at dangerously low levels right now, not just for Vermont but for every other State that has been hit with the same kind of problems. Without supplemental funding to these and the other emergency accounts, Vermont and all the other 49 States with ongoing Federal disasters are not going to have the resources to rebuild.

Americans should be worried about Americans. The kind of money we are talking about we throw away in Iraq and Afghanistan in 1 week's time and we do it on a credit card and we say we don't have to pay for it. Now we have

some say: If we are going to help Americans, we better find out some way we can pay for it. What can we take away from other Americans to help these Americans? Can we take away from education, medical research, housing?

Let's start thinking about America. We have seen the billions, eventually trillions, we have spent trying to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan, and we know how much that is appreciated. These are Americans who do appreciate and need the help.

Let us come home. Let us take care of the needs in America. There is so much on the line, so starkly for so many, it would be horrible and unseemly to play politics with disaster relief. We have never done this before.

I was heartened, as I came into one, badly damaged town and I got an e-mail from a very conservative Republican Senator who said: PAT, you helped us when our State was hit. What can we do to help your State? That is the kind of bipartisanship, Republicans and Democrats, have displayed in the past to come together.

Thousands of American families and businesses have been devastated by an unprecedented series of floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires—look at the pictures out of Texas—and other disasters over these years. The people are hurting out there. They are not thinking about Democrats versus Republicans or red States versus blue States. They are saying: We are Americans. We help everybody else; we can at least help ourselves. People are desperate for a helping hand from their fellow Americans. We are one Nation. We have traditionally come to the aid of our fellow Americans in times of need.

In my 37 years in the Senate, we have always dealt with disaster bills together. We haven't cared whether it was a Republican State or a Democratic State or Democratic or Republican President. We have worked across the aisle, in the spirit of bipartisanship, in the best interests of America and in the best tradition of our country. As a nation, can we afford to toss that tradition and cooperation overboard? It is unconscionable that a small number decided to inject politics and political point-scoring into a situation that already is so difficult and so laden with grim realities for so many of our fellow citizens. Go and talk to a farmer who has seen his herd decimated and tell him that. Go and see a small business owner who is a major employer in a small town who is saying: I don't know how I can keep hiring these people. Go and tell a child who has asked their parents when the road will be done so we can go to school or visit grandma. Tell them. Tell them.

Leader REID is right to bring an emergency disaster relief package to the floor that will give aid to all 50 States suffering from the effects of unprecedented natural disasters. I state the obvious when I say we need Republican cooperation to get this urgent job

done. I encourage my colleagues to end this shameful filibuster of the disaster relief bill. Let us proceed to a full debate on how to help our fellow Americans—our fellow Americans—as quickly as we can.

I have taken a lot of time of the Senate. I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:41 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

#### APPROVING THE RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the urgent need for FEMA disaster funds, which is under this Burma joint resolution. I was very concerned when I heard some of my colleagues in the House of Representatives demanding that spending cuts be in exchange for supplemental disaster relief funds. Last night, we could not even pass a procedural vote to proceed to a bill that would provide this needed relief. This raises the question, What kind of country are we? Are we a country that takes care of the victims of disasters without hesitation or reluctance or are we a country that engages in misguided debates in the midst of a disaster when our citizens need us the most?

My State of Minnesota has seen its fair share of natural disasters over the last few years. In the past year and a half, President Obama has declared seven Federal disasters in my State. I have seen the devastation Mother Nature can cause. I have seen communities that desperately need Federal assistance to recover. Northwest Minnesota has seen the phenomenon of 100-year floods turn into nearly annual events. Every spring, towns in the Red River Valley of the north hope that this year will not see another record-setting flood.

This spring, I visited Georgetown, MN, and watched as they built emergency earthen levees to protect their town. The town had run out of the clay needed to build their levee, and the only choice left for them was to dig up their baseball field—their park, the diamond and the rest of the park. I watched as they dug up the heart of their community to protect their homes and businesses.

That same day, I visited Oslo, MN. Flooding in the Red River turns Oslo into an island town. Residents are cut off from the rest of Minnesota for weeks as the Red River floods all of the surrounding roads. That night, as I

left, I was one of the last cars to make it out of town before all the roads were closed, and its residents prayed that the temporary levees would hold.

The residents of Georgetown and Oslo were doing what they could do to protect themselves, but not all disasters can be anticipated. On June 17 of last year, storms brought 39 tornadoes, 26 funnel clouds, and 69 reports of hail in Minnesota. Three Minnesotans died.

The town of Wadena was hit the hardest; 234 homes were damaged. The roof was torn off the high school, and the county fairgrounds and community center were destroyed.

After a disaster, Minnesotans have enough to worry about. It would be terribly unfair to pile politics on top of their worries. Natural disasters just happen. They are acts of God, and they happen without warning. Minnesotans need to know, when their State and local governments are overwhelmed, that their Federal Government will be there to help them recover. Every State needs to know that; we are one country. And they need to know we will not play politics with their lives and their livelihood.

Many of the same people who are demanding that we offset the costs of natural disasters have voted year after year to fund our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq without paying for them. Some have done this for nearly 10 years now. They have passed on well over \$1 trillion in debt to our children to finance wars that have not been a surprise and that we could have and should have been budgeting for from the beginning.

For the last 10 years, we have paid for wars by borrowing from countries such as China willing to finance our debt and by giant emergency spending bills, as they are called. That is unusual in American history, where wars usually prompt reevaluations of our fiscal policy.

This spring, I introduced my Pay for War resolution to address this fiscal irresponsibility. My resolution would simply require that war spending be offset in the future. To be sure, there can be real emergencies that require the immediate exercise of military force with its attendant costs. That is why my resolution allows the offset requirement to be waived in such emergencies. But when you know year-in and year-out that you are going to be at war, you should budget for that and not just pass the costs on to your children.

Iraq and Afghanistan have cost us well over \$1 trillion, and we will be paying for years to care for the veterans who came back with the wounds of war. That did not singlehandedly create our deficit problem, but it sure made it a lot worse. Yet many of the same people who now demand that we must offset disaster spending for Americans who have lost their homes or are suffering otherwise have been fine with spending staggering sums of money on our wars—without offsetting them.

Doesn't that seem just a little hypocritical? I wonder, what kind of mindset does it take to conclude that it is OK to pass on to your children the costs of war. Yet, when Americans have lost their homes or had their communities destroyed, it is not OK to respond to that emergency in an appropriate way? It just does not make sense to me.

When Congress plans its spending, it can and should be accounted for through a budget. But when emergencies arise—and natural disasters are the quintessential emergency—we should not hesitate to act for the good of the American people. I believe the United States of America is a country that protects its citizens when they are at their most vulnerable. I hope this Congress will confirm that conviction by voting for emergency aid to the communities across this Nation that have been devastated by natural disasters.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as you no doubt know, the State of Vermont has been hit very hard by Hurricane Irene. The storm caused widespread flooding, resulting in a number of deaths, the loss of many homes and businesses, and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to our property and our infrastructure. I have visited many of the most hard hit towns, and I was shocked and moved by the extent of the damage. Many of these towns still today have very limited access because the roads and bridges that link them to the outside world have been destroyed. Irene will go down in history as one of the very worst natural disasters ever to hit the State of Vermont.

Let me take this opportunity again to thank everybody who has lent a hand to help their friends and neighbors stricken by this disaster. I especially wish to commend and thank our emergency responders—they did a fantastic job—the Vermont National Guard and our local officials for all they are doing to assist communities and individuals in getting back on their feet.

We still do not know the cost of this disaster, but let me share with you just a few preliminary figures, and really this is quite remarkable, remembering that Vermont is a State of about 630,000 people, with approximately 200,000 households.

Today, already more than 4,200 Vermonters—and by and large, those are households—have registered with FEMA. With 200,000 households, we have over 4,000 that have already registered with FEMA.

To date, there have been more than 700 homes confirmed as severely damaged or totally destroyed. Again, we have about 200,000 households and 700 homes have been confirmed as severely damaged or completely destroyed.

More than 72,000 homes across the State were left without electricity.