

and Cairo, IL. The Mississippi River is a critical transportation artery for essential commodities, so the financial impact if the river shuts down could reach far beyond the Midwest.

The low water levels are the result of this summer's devastating drought that has been continuing to plague many States in the United States. It has been the worst drought in more than half a century in the Midwest. As of last month, over 60 percent of the United States was experiencing drought conditions still. In my State of Illinois, over 90 percent of the land is still "abnormally dry" or worse.

Economists now predict that the drought will cost the government over \$12 billion in aid to farmers and ranchers. This is in addition to the cost of destruction caused in late October by Hurricane Sandy, the largest hurricane to ever form in the Atlantic basin. It is estimated that Sandy will cost almost \$80 billion in Federal funding for the replacement of homes, infrastructure, and buildings.

Combined, the drought and Sandy will cost the Federal Government tens of billions of dollars at a time when we are talking about our debt. It is the job of Congress and the administration to help these Americans in time of need. Make no mistake about it, we should, we will. But we need to be honest about how we plan for disaster spending. According to a report by the GAO in September, there have been over 540 disaster declarations in the last 8 years requiring over \$90 billion in Federal aid. It is time we face facts and state the obvious: Weather is getting worse. Extreme weather events are happening with increased frequency and intensity.

I held a hearing last year to talk about this issue, to examine whether the Federal Government is prepared for this. The answer is no. I did not bring in the environmentalists, did not even bring in the government employees. I brought in the insurance industry, the people who write casualty policies, who are probably more attuned to the weather than anybody. They said many more disastrous weather events will follow, all of them more expensive.

The Federal Government needs to rethink how we protect Federal assets and provide disaster assistance to communities on a more regular basis. Many are saying that 100-year weather events are now happening every 2 or 3 years. But as we debate climate change and global warming, the majority of Americans view the recent extreme weather events as evidence the problem is no longer vague or distant. Many have likened the effects of climate change to those of steroids in baseball. While no one can say that a given home run hit by a player using steroids was the result of the drug, you can attribute the overall increase in the batting average and the number of home runs a player hits during a season to be linked to the use of steroids.

Similarly, though the cause of a single weather event cannot be directly

traced to climate change, extreme weather events do serve as a wakeup call that an environmental crisis of global proportion is occurring.

I find it incredible how little we talk about this. When I think about our responsibility in the Senate and Congress, we are almost afraid to bring it up because it is controversial, because some on the right are in complete denial that anything is going on here. The rise in global temperatures has led to rising sea levels, warmer air and, as a result, more extreme weather. It has also led, at the same time—that is why some of this sounds so contradictory—to a decline in the size of the Great Lakes. Lake Michigan is losing water—you can see it on the shoreline—at the same time as we say the oceans are rising.

The National Climatic Data Center just reported that October was the 332nd month in a row of above-average global temperatures. That is over 27 years of warming temperatures. Is that fair warning? I think it is. During the last decade, the United States has experienced twice as many record high temperatures as record lows, and scientists project that record highs will outnumber record lows 20 to 1 by the year 2050.

In May, NOAA reported that America had just lived through the hottest 12 months ever recorded. Even before Sandy and the droughts this year, the United States was still recovering from extreme weather events of last year. In February of last year, Chicago was shut down with 2 feet of snow and 60-mile-an-hour winds when a blizzard hammered the city. It caused 36 deaths, stranded 1,500 people on Lake Shore Drive, which I go back and forth on every day. I still find it hard to imagine: 1,500 people stuck on Lake Shore Drive. It resulted in \$3.9 billion in losses.

April was the wettest April in 116 years in the Midwest, forcing the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to flood thousands of square miles. This is 2011 I am talking about.

There were 326 tornadoes in May throughout the Midwest and Southern United States, resulting in the deadliest May since 1933.

Wildfires burned 3 million acres of property across the Western States causing over \$1 billion in damages, and Hurricane Irene devastated the Atlantic coast, causing \$4.3 billion in damages, a very small amount compared to Sandy but significant still for those affected.

Nationwide, the financial consequences of weather-related disasters and climate change hit a historic new high last year. U.S. disasters caused over \$55 billion in damages. Federal, State, and local governments are paying out more every year in damages and lost productivity. So the question is, as a government, what are we going to do about this? Is this the new normal?

The insurance and defense sectors have looked at the scientific data.

They are changing their operations. They are preparing for worse and even bigger losses.

Insurance commissioners in California, New York, and Washington now require companies to disclose how they are working to plot the effects of climate change and their responses. Congress may be in denial, but the real world, the private sector, is not. As the government is the ultimate insurer of millions of Americans in the crop insurance and National Flood Insurance Programs, we have to get serious about addressing the cause and effects of climate change and the solvency and future of these important programs.

Computer models suggest that the storms and heat waves we are seeing will become stronger and more extreme in the future, causing even greater damage. Congress can no longer afford to ignore this issue.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FISCAL CHALLENGES

Mr. COONS. Madam President, this is a critical moment. Over the next few weeks, serious choices must be made about how our Nation spends its money, about our national budget. At its heart, a budget is a statement of balance. A budget shows the world what we care about, what we prioritize, what we invest in, how we intend to build our future. Everyone who comes to this Chamber comes with their own values, representing their own State. But each of us also knows we have to find a way to bridge those divides to work together to solve the enormous fiscal challenges we face as a Nation. That means addressing the more than \$500 billion in automatic spending cuts, tax increases, and other fiscal changes all scheduled to take place at the beginning of the next year and known collectively as the fiscal cliff.

We find ourselves at the edge of this cliff because of our shared beliefs that deficits matter and that we can't keep spending money we don't have. As it stands today, our deficit and debt are unsustainable. Last year we ran a budget deficit of well over \$1 trillion, and now we have a national debt that exceeds \$16 trillion. If we don't get these numbers under control, interest payments will inevitably skyrocket, taking up a larger and larger percentage of our budget until they crowd out other critical, pro-growth investments in our country's competitiveness and the essential social safety net that puts a circle of protection around the most vulnerable in our country. I don't believe either one of us wants to put those two vital things at risk.

When a budget is so out of balance we have to take a hard look at both the money coming in and the money going out. The only way to get back on track, in my view, is to address both sides of this equation—revenue and spending. We have to find a balanced solution that combines tough spending cuts with reforms to our Tax Code that bring in more revenue while also ensuring fairness to taxpayers. I believe there is real momentum for this kind of big, balanced, bipartisan solution for the first time in a long time.

We have seen some courageous Republicans in both the House and Senate recently stand and say that revenue has to be on the table and a few even that an increase in tax rates for the wealthiest Americans may be necessary to get a budget deal that moves us forward. They know what we all know—that, frankly, even the most drastic across-the-board spending cuts, like the kinds contained in the sequester that will kick in in January, won't save enough to close the budget gap. At the same time, across-the-board, meat ax cuts to domestic programs violate some of our basic American values by failing to protect the most vulnerable in our society, those who I believe our values call us to put a circle of protection around, even in this most difficult recovery.

Risking public safety, for example, by cutting funding for police and firefighters or leaving families out in the cold this winter by cutting heating assistance to low-income seniors—these are not American values. They are not the best way to solve our fiscal challenge. The truth is that those programs specifically have already been cut more than I would ever have liked to have seen. The Budget Control Act passed last year made a dramatic \$1 trillion in spending cuts over the coming decade, which fell like an ax on some community-based programs on which Delaware families depend and which I used as county executive, in partnership with our community, to fight for the disabled for affordable housing and for low-income heating assistance programs.

So let's not let this moment pass us by. Let's instead seize the opportunity before us and start finding areas where, across the aisle and between the Chambers of the Senate and the House, we can agree. One of those areas of agreement is the need to extend tax cuts for the middle class, for families and small businesses still working their way out of the deep hole of the financial collapse of 2008 and still making their way through this recovery.

No one from either party, from the House, the Senate, or any State in this country, wants to raise taxes on middle-class families and small businesses and families like Deborah's.

Deborah is a single mother in Wilmington, DE—my hometown—who is working a full-time job and a part-time job on top of that just to make ends meet. She wrote to my office, con-

cerned about tax increases and the fiscal cliff. She said that "the middle class is the heart and soul of this country—what keeps it going—what else can we be hit with? I know that I cannot take on any more financially."

So my first call today is let's give Deborah and families like hers in Delaware and around the country the certainty, before we end this calendar year, of knowing their taxes will not go up in 26 days when the calendar turns to 2013. One way to do that is for the House to take up and pass legislation this body has already considered and passed in a bipartisan way that would extend the Bush-era tax cuts for 98 percent of families and 97 percent of small businesses while also achieving nearly \$1 trillion in debt and deficit reduction.

This bill extends tax cuts that would otherwise expire for all Americans who earn income and for all small businesses that earn revenue but just on the first \$200,000 of individual income or \$250,000 in family income.

Tax rates on income over and above $\frac{1}{4}$ million a year would revert to the levels of the Clinton administration, the time of enormous economic growth and prosperity.

This one step would blunt the impact of the fiscal cliff for the vast majority of Americans and give them the certainty they so badly need. It would also be a serious downpayment on meaningful deficit reduction and ensure that our budget more closely reflects our values, our fundamental belief in the American dream and that if you work hard, you can still get ahead.

Leading Republicans in the House and the Senate, including Senator SNOWE and Congressman COLE, have urged the House to move forward and pass this bill to provide badly needed security and certainty to middle-class families before the end of this year. I join their call, but let's not stop there. Let's keep going and find additional areas of compromise and constructive common ground to provide the business community with the certainty they need to plan the deployment and investment of capital so they can get Americans back to work. This would provide the market with certainty to sustain this recovery, while continuing to invest in our future. This would help families who need to know their budget future and need to be able to have confidence to take risks, to invest in growth. They want to educate their children, to buy a larger home, to take care of their children and their parents. To find the kind of balanced, bipartisan, long-term solution we need is to find a solution to all of these problems.

It is only by coming together over the next few weeks—not as Republicans and Democrats but as Americans—that we can avoid a fiscal calamity that was entirely predictable. This is the result of a decade of unresolved budget fighting in this Chamber. For both parties, simply blaming the other side and waiting for the next election

to give us a stronger mandate is no longer a tolerable or sustainable path forward. Working together is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.

Americans have faced tough times before, but our strength has always been our unity and our ability to come together. It is my hope, my prayer, that faced with the challenge of the impending fiscal cliff, we can do it again.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to enter into a colloquy with the senior Senator from Delaware.

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

Mr. CARPER. Would my colleague yield?

Madam President, I want to follow up—we are supposed to talk about tomorrow being Delaware Day, if I could do that. But I wish to follow up on Senator COONS' remarks on the fiscal cliff.

A friend of mine who has done a lot of research on the fiscal cliff says that if you look at domestic and discretionary spending, that is not really the overwhelming problem as far as why we continue to have a big budget deficit. The problem is really twofold. One of those is that if you look at revenues as a percentage of GDP, historically when we have been in budget, the revenues as a percentage of GDP, at least in the last 10, 15 years, revenues have been about 21 percent of GDP. Today they are about 15, 16 percent of GDP.

But the other big driver in our deficit situation going forward is health care costs. It is health care costs, including Medicare and Medicaid. While we have to be smart enough to try to figure it out while being humane about caring for older people and the poor who count on Medicaid and Medicare to some extent, we have to focus on how to get better health care results for less money. That is what we have to focus on—how to get better health care results for less money. There are a lot of good ideas for doing that. Some of them are actually part of the health care law for our country.

So it is revenues, and the other key here is better health care results for less money. We need to make sure that we have focused on Medicare and Medicaid in a humane way and that we do so in a way that doesn't harm, doesn't hurt, is not mean-spirited to those who depend on those programs.

At the same time, we need to preserve those programs for the coming generations. For the pages down here—how old are you guys? Fifteen, sixteen years of age? Several of you are nodding your heads. We want to make sure these programs are still around when you are 65, 66, 67 or older. That is what this is for. It is sort of a P.S. to the wonderful comments of my colleague from Delaware.

What is tomorrow in Delaware, I ask the Senator?

I seem to forget. What is this all about?

Mr. COONS. Madam President, as anyone who has looked at the beautiful

Delaware flag knows—and it flies in our offices and hallways here—it has a date emblazoned on the bottom—December 7, 1787, and that is known as Delaware Day. That is the day when Delaware became the first State to ratify the Constitution. So to celebrate Delaware Day, we do some things together, don't we?

Mr. CARPER. And we have fun doing them. One of the things we are going to do—a great idea from a brandnew Senator to Delaware about a year ago—is to have a “Taste of Delaware.” In fact, we are doing that this afternoon. It is not something paid for by the Federal Government but sponsored by our Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, as I recall, and others of its members to sort of be able to show off some of the finest of our State, and some of them pretty tasty, as it turns out. So we are looking forward to a lot of people coming by and enjoying that.

Mr. COONS. We are looking forward to doing that in just a few minutes, actually. We have Dogfish Head Beer, we have Grottos pizza, and Capriotti subs, and dozens of restaurateurs and breweries and wineries from across Delaware—in age-appropriate settings—who will make available some of the finest of what Delaware has to offer. So it is my hope members of staff and our colleagues will join in the celebration of Delaware Day.

One of the questions folks who are listening might have is: What about Delaware are you celebrating? It is, in my experience—and I believe my colleague's—a State that is not just the First State because of a wonderful accident of history, where we were the first State to have the vision and the courage to sign the Constitution, to ratify it, but it is also a State that has a nearly unique culture—a culture of respect, of innovation, of education, and of civility. It is a place that has a special, even a unique political culture, one that is at times the polar opposite of what I have seen here—forgive me, Madam President—in the last 2 years. Delaware, much like New Hampshire, feels and seems like a small town that is, through the magic of federalism and the Connecticut Compromise and the Continental Congress, a State with two Senators.

One of the things I am proudest of about my State—and Senator CARPER knows this well—is a tradition that just celebrated its 200th anniversary. It is the epitome of what we call the Delaware Way. It is a tradition that happens 2 days after every election. It is called Return Day, and it happens in Georgetown, which is the county seat of our southernmost county, Sussex County. What happens 2 days after the election—or the first thing that happens, because there are a lot of different pieces to it—is we all gather out at a local farm, and two by two—ark rules—the candidates who ran against each other in the general election get into horse-drawn carriages and ride—slowly—down the main streets of

Georgetown where crowds of thousands come out to see the candidates, who just days before were engaged in vigorous political combat, being polite, being friendly, and waving to the crowds.

What happens after that, I ask Senator CARPER?

Mr. CARPER. We have this beautiful center of Georgetown, with all these beautiful old brick buildings, courthouses and other buildings, and as we gather there in the circle of Georgetown—and the Senator may have said this and I just missed it—but the town crier comes out on the balcony of the courthouse and he has on his top hat and his tails and he announces the results of the election 2 days earlier. This is Thursday after the election. He calls out the results of the election 2 days earlier just for Sussex County, DE, where about a sixth of our State's population lives. He calls out the results of everything from President, Vice President, all the way down to justice of the peace or sheriff. And when he finishes, we have a couple of short speeches on the platform there in front of thousands of people, maybe a patriotic song or two, and then the leaders of parties, Democrat, Republican, maybe Libertarian chairman, take a hatchet—a pretty big hatchet—and they grab it, each holding on, and they put it down in a glass aquarium half full of sand. And then someone brings in some buckets of sand, maybe from Rehoboth Beach or Dewey Beach, and they cover up and literally bury the hatchet.

Some of my colleagues from New Jersey said: If we had a ceremony like that in our State, and we buried the hatchet, it probably wouldn't be in the sand. It would be in the anatomy or some part of the body of our opponents. But we do it in the sand. And then we have maybe a benediction, and we go off and eat, and people open their homes for a reception. So as the day carries on and the Sun sets in the west, the travails and the passions of the election begin to dissipate and people start to think and refocus not on how do we beat our opponents' brains out but how do we work together to govern our State.

It is a wonderful tradition. We have talked about this before. I think we could use a return day for our country. It certainly works in our State. It has a very civilizing effect on all our campaigns.

Mr. COONS. Whether it is the reception in the morning, the long carriage ride through the middle of Georgetown, the speeches on the podium, the announcement of the results, the liberal burying of the hatchet, or the receptions that go on all afternoon and into the night, the experience of Return Day for me—and I believe for my colleague Senator CARPER—has been one of reconciliation, one of moving past the election and then forward toward the challenge of making decisions together for the people we represent.

Everybody shows up—the winners and the losers. It is only the sorest of

losers who don't show up and only the most arrogant of winners who don't show up. So, frankly, it is almost always everybody. In the elections I have been blessed to stand in and be successful in for the people of Delaware, the Return Day is a great end to the campaign season and beginning of our season of service to the people of Delaware.

So as we go from the floor now to the reception in honor of Delaware Day, I want to say how grateful I am to serve with my senior Senator, who has always been personally a model of the civility, of graciousness, and of the service that marks the Delaware Way and marks Delaware Day which we celebrate officially tomorrow but which we kick off tonight with a reception.

Mr. CARPER. I would add to that this is a commitment to civility that Senator COONS and I share, and it is also one that our Congressman JOHN CARNEY certainly does, and winning in races before him, Mike Castle. If you think of all of those—Castle with a “C”, CARNEY with a “C”, COONS with a “C”, and CARPER with a “C”—people say what is it with the letter “C” and the State of Delaware? If I can, before I close here, I want to roll back in time about the economy of our State. People say what do you all do there? How do you provide for your living, your income? I would say the economy of our State is pretty much founded on the letter “C.” It includes corn. We started off by growing corn. Then chickens. There are a whole of lot of chickens there. For every person in Delaware, there are 300 chickens. For anyone listening and wondering what to have for dinner, chicken would be good. We have chemicals—the DuPont Company. A poor impoverished French family came to Delaware over 200 years ago and established what I call the DuPont country club. They didn't have many members. They figured they needed to establish some jobs so people could join their country club, so they started a chemical company, and a power company, and now they have quite a successful science company in our State—for over 200 years. We have cars. We have built a lot of cars over the years for GM and Chrysler. We are home to corporations of over half the New York Stock Exchange, half the Fortune 500. Credit card businesses are in our State. The coast of our State is the site of the Nation's summer capital—Rehoboth Beach and a bunch of other places. So the letter “C” has been pretty big.

People say: Well, why do they call you the First State? Well, we are actually the first colony that threw off the yoke of British tyranny on June 15, 1776 and at the same time said to Pennsylvania, take a hike, we want to be a State on our own. And then 225 years from tomorrow, to be exact, we were the first State to ratify the Constitution.

We have the best beaches in the country. Last year I think there were four five-star beaches in America, with

two of them in Delaware—Rehoboth and Dewey Beach. We have the best Air Force base, we think, in the world. We were first in Ph.Ds per capita. We have, I think, the finest Judiciary—acknowledged year after year after year as the finest judicial system in the States. We have the best financial controls and cash management system. We have had triple A credit rating since—what was that guy's name as Governor, Carper or something? We continue to have that kind of credit rating. So we are proud of being first.

What is our State motto? "It is good to be first." And we attempt to be first in a whole lot of ways. Some things you don't want to be first in, and we want to be last in those. But we are proud of what we are first in—first in civility.

As Senator COONS said, this all goes back to Return Day. When you announce your candidacy for election, whether it is for the U.S. Senate or as sheriff, you know at the end of the campaign—2 days after the campaign—you are going to be in Georgetown, DE, in a horse-drawn carriage or maybe an antique car with the man or woman you were running against, their family, your family, and surrounded by friends and supporters and thousands of other people. And I think it has a very tempering effect on the nature of our campaigns, a wonderful effect.

That is one of much that we are proud of in our State. We are lucky to be Senators from this State, but this is a State that works and focuses on results. This is a State where we govern from the middle, whether the Governor is DuPont or Castle or CARPER or Markell. And whether the Senator is CARPER or COONS or Biden or Kaufman, we govern from the middle. We are a State where Democrats and Republicans actually like each other. We just want to get things done and do what is right for our State.

With that in mind, we hope some of our friends and neighbors can join us later today in the Russell Building up on the third floor. We will make a toast to Delaware and enjoy some sarsaparilla and some other goodies as well.

It is a great joy to serve with my friend.

Mr. COONS. I thank my colleague.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Let me be the first to congratulate my two colleagues from Delaware on Delaware Day. Have a happy Delaware Day.

We have a lot of great things in Colorado, but I am not going to try to outcompete you on beaches this afternoon. We don't have a lot of those. I do think it puts me in mind of something, and that is our constitution. Delaware, as Senator COONS mentioned, was the first State to ratify the Constitution of this great country. My State didn't become a State until nearly a century later. We are the Centennial State as a result of that.

That constitution that enabled generation upon generation of Americans had a preamble which said: to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. It is important in these days of these budget discussions to remind ourselves they didn't stop with themselves. The document doesn't stop with ourselves. It is about ourselves and our posterity. That is what we are talking about here when we are involved in this budget discussion. These aren't decisions that are about ourselves, these are decisions that are about the next generation of Americans and the generation after that. And it is time for us to do our job. It is time for us to walk back from this fiscal cliff and come up with a comprehensive plan. We know what the outlines of that are today, and we need to stop playing political games in this holiday season and get this work done, not for ourselves but for our posterity.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, as you know, I have been to the floor many times in the last several years to talk about the dysfunction that reigns in this place too often. But today I am here on a happier occasion because I want to celebrate an accomplishment, a bipartisan accomplishment that I think is very important. We were able to work together earlier this week to improve and expand something called Troops to Teachers. Nothing makes a greater difference to student learning than great teaching. Our teachers are critical to our kids' success and, to a greater extent, our country's competitiveness in the economy.

America's future depends on our ability to recruit and retain great teachers. And by the way, we are falling down on the job. Fifty percent of the people who go into teaching leave the profession in the first 5 years, which means we don't have the benefit of the experience they have gained over that period of time. And I will save for another day what we need to do about this, but for today's purposes let me observe we have done almost nothing—virtually nothing—as a country to change the way we think about recruiting teachers, retaining teachers, inspiring teachers in this country since we had a labor market that discriminated against women and gave them two professional choices, one being a teacher, or a nurse.

Thank goodness, those days are long gone. But we have not modernized our system to make it as attractive to people as it needs to be if we are serious about educating the next generation of Americans. I believe it is our duty in that context to ensure we support new and existing pathways to the teaching profession. We should be making it easier, not harder, for those who want to serve our country in America's classrooms. Troops to Teachers is one of those undertakings. It has been recruiting and placing veterans and serv-

ice men and women in classrooms around the country since 1994. It brings veterans and servicemembers into some of the hardest-to-serve areas in our country.

But in Colorado and across the United States we have school districts near military installations that have not been eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers. These barriers send exactly the wrong message. If veterans want to make a difference in a student's life, they should be able to teach where they are needed most. That is why in 2009 I worked with Senator McCain and his staff to introduce legislation to make it easier for veterans to participate and continue their service in our classrooms.

These changes to the program will increase the number of schools eligible to participate by 49 percent. In Colorado alone, that means it will open over 1,000 of our schools to veterans and servicemembers who want to participate. As someone who has spent a lot of time in the classrooms as a former superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, the benefits of Troops to Teachers for our students are crystal clear to me.

When he talks about this program, Senator McCain often mentions his English teacher—Mr. William B. Ravenel—an Army veteran who served with General Patton in World War II. Because there is no way I could say it better, I wish to quote my friend from Arizona.

Every child should be blessed with a teacher like I had, and to learn at institutions with high academic standards and codes of conduct that reinforce the values their parents try to impart to them. Many students do have that opportunity. But too many do not. And government should be concerned with their fate.

I could not agree more with Senator JOHN McCain. Our military is the strongest in the world not because of our weapons or our tanks but because of the men and women who choose to serve. Troops to Teachers enlists their talents, their drive, their commitment to help make America's system of public education once again the driver of the American dream.

I am glad to have done this bipartisan work with Senator McCain to pass this amendment, and I wish to thank Senator McCain and his staff who worked so hard to get this over the finish line.

Finally, I would like to thank Senator WEBB for his leadership on this initiative, as well as Chairman LEVIN and the staff of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from New Mexico.

CUBA TRADE EMBARGO

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, earlier today, the Senate voted to grant permanent normal trade relations to Russia by a vote of 92 to 4, and I strongly supported that bill.