

Never before has the farm bill been unfinished, unaddressed, while Congress took their month-long break in August. Yet there it is. We came back and here we are and we still have no action from the House. We can't have a conference committee because the House hasn't acted. We can't address the changes in the House bill because the House hasn't acted. And who is paying the price? Farmers and ranchers, devastated by the worst wildfires in over 100 years.

Now, let me be clear. I would prefer that we pass the farm bill. But we have not. And we cannot control what the other Chamber is doing. If we do not get these key disaster relief programs, ranchers and farmers who have lost livestock or grazing land in these wildfires will be left with few options. That is wrong. A rancher in southeast Oregon who has already been devastated by the wildfire should not pay the price because the U.S. House of Representatives will not bring the farm bill to the floor. There are farmers all across the country who have been hit hard by drought. They, too, are held hostage. They need disaster assistance.

Well, very soon we are going to be talking about a very substantial disaster bill, and it is appropriate that we will be doing so. I will be supporting it because the devastation that has been wrought in States such as New Jersey and New York is exceptional, and we as a nation need to hold hands with the citizens of these States. We need to help them restore their lives and rebuild. But we need to hold hands in partnership with the ranchers and farmers in Oregon who have been devastated by these wildfires as well.

So if the House has not acted on the farm bill when we come to this floor to address relief for those impacted by Hurricane Sandy, then I am going to ask all my colleagues to work with me in the same partnership in which we supported folks in the South after Katrina, the same partnership we will have in supporting the folks in the Northeast due to the consequences of Hurricane Sandy, to support the ranchers and farmers of Oregon who have been so devastated by these worst ever fires.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. I defer to the lovely lady from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

#### TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to comment about some wonderful

men in the Senate who are retiring on both sides of the aisle. Earlier today I spoke about my deep affection and sorry-to-see-go friends OLYMPIA SNOWE and KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, but I want to rise as the dean of the women in the Senate to say some very special words about very special men on both sides of the aisle. Because when I came to the Senate, it was only Nancy Kassebaum and myself, and yet we worked on so many issues together. There are really wonderful men here who supported me, supported our issues, but really stood up for those States and their communities.

DANNY AKAKA

I want to say goodbye, aloha, to my very good friend DANNY AKAKA, a wonderful man with whom I have served in both the House and the Senate. He has been a real advocate not only for the people of Hawaii but, wow, the way he stood up for the Federal workforce, the civil servants who do such a great job, the outstanding job he has done on the Veterans' Committee.

Lives are better off, particularly for our veterans. I want to say a wonderful goodbye and give a hug to him because he demonstrates that you do not have to be loud to be powerful.

DICK LUGAR

I also wish to pay tribute to someone on the other side of the aisle, my very good friend and someone I admire tremendously, Senator DICK LUGAR from Indiana. Who does not admire Senator LUGAR, a gentleman, a scholar, I might even add a Rhodes Scholar, a definite advocate for Indiana, an incredible thought leader on foreign policy.

I am so proud of him and the work he did and the way he reached across the aisle to work with our colleague Senator Sam Nunn on their famous Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. They truly worked together to begin to end the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union and made the world a better and safer place.

We want to wish Senator LUGAR a fond farewell and let him know he will be deeply missed. I certainly will miss him. I valued his thought, his counsel, his observations, particularly in the area of foreign policy. He taught me a little bit about foreign policy too.

JEFF BINGAMAN

I also want to say a goodbye to our friend JEFF BINGAMAN of New Mexico, someone who has also brought intellectual rigor, a lawyer's insistence on thoroughness, and a real commitment to people. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with him on the HELP Committee, especially on the Affordable Care Act. I was proud to support all that he did, particularly in developing and focusing on the health workforce for the future.

I knew I could count on JEFF in the committee and on the floor as one of those men whom I refer to as a Gallahad, where men of quality always supported us women as we sought

equality. Our initiatives to end discrimination against women in health care and in the workplace were some of our proudest achievements in working together.

JON KYL

I also wish to comment about JON KYL. I have worked across the aisle from JON KYL and I have been seated across the table from him at everything from Bible study groups to the Senate Intelligence Committee. We studied the words of the Bible together to make ourselves better, and we worked in our committees to make the world better.

We lived through September 11 and the terrible attacks that occurred in our country and the anthrax attacks in our offices. With his steady leadership, his resourceful mind, his can-do know-how, we worked together to get the job done. I was delighted to be able to work with him in a way that called forth our highest and better selves to look out for our country. I wish him the best in his journey.

KENT CONRAD

I wish to comment too about KENT CONRAD. Wow, what a numbers guy. Those charts—I loved those charts. But we have many other things in common besides a love of charts. We love baseball. We love the Baltimore Orioles and, I might add, an occasional polka at Blob's Beer Garden in Maryland. Now you know KENT. He looks like Clark Kent. And he is a Superman when it comes to the budget. But, wow, when they played "Roll Out the Barrel," he was quite a hooper.

Most of all, what I admired about him is the way he breathed life into the numbers. He not only wanted a more frugal government, but he was also passionate and compassionate about how we could use the power of the purse to improve the world and at the same time maintain sensible spending standards.

I am going to look forward to seeing him with or without his charts and maybe in a dugout.

BEN NELSON

I wish also to say goodbye to BEN NELSON of Nebraska, a brother appropriator. We salute him for his work for the people of Nebraska and the Nation. Using those committee assignments on Appropriations, Agriculture, and Armed Services, he looked out for rural communities and he stood up for men and women in the military. I knew he took it as a personal responsibility, the issues around personnel for our military, that they had the right pay, the right equipment, and we protected their benefits.

HERB KOHL

A comment about HERB KOHL, another brother appropriator, the very essence of civility. He brought a businessman's savvy with a deep compassion and commitment to the people of Wisconsin. Now we all know the Kohl family. They own basketball teams, they own department stores. I tell you,

that HERB, he understood retail, whether it was in politics fighting for the people and their day-to-day needs or the national policy of looking out for working families as they build their lives. He stood up for Wisconsin cheese, the Green Bay Packers, his basketball team. But most of all, he stood up for the people. With HERB, what a sense of honor. His handshake was always good. You could count on him. It was a binding contract.

SCOTT BROWN

I wish also to say a word about Senator SCOTT BROWN. Many of you know that I was a social worker and a child abuse worker. I want to say personally, I so admire Senator BROWN's candor and being forthcoming when he shared with the world his own child abuse experience in his book, "Against All Odds." He not only experienced the terrible thing that happened to him, but he went on to talk about how he handled this terrible tragedy. I must say, I compliment him. It was a model, that as a young boy this terrible event would not hold him back. I am sure his powerful words helped many others come into the light. As a former child abuse social worker, I want to thank him publicly for what he has done not only in this institution but to help other boys—and even girls—who also faced a terrible tragedy and refused to be a victim but went on to do well. I wish him well.

JIM WEBB

Senator JIM WEBB, the Senate's own marine and former Secretary of the Navy, I have known him for more than 20 years, since he was Secretary of the Navy under Ronald Reagan. Well, in the beginning we fought on many issues, particularly gender equality. When Senator WEBB was the new Secretary of the Navy and I was a new Senator, we had a different view on where women should be in the military, and we duked it out. But you know what. Over the years we came to know each other, respect each other, and appreciate each other's views. I so appreciate the fact that he is an unabashed, unrelenting fierce fighter for our men and women in uniform, fighting for them when they are on the front lines and when they return to the homefront.

I am so proud of the fact that I could vote for the 21st century GI bill for those serving in the military, to make sure that when they are on the front line, they get the education here so they will not be on the unemployment line. His bill was the most significant legislation for veterans since World War II. So I say to Senator WEBB, semper fi, and God bless you.

JOE LIEBERMAN

Then to my good friend, JOE LIEBERMAN—my friend JOE, a true Independent. We have worked together on issues related to the Middle East and the safety and security of Israel. We worked to bring character education into our schools because we do believe that character counts.

Working with JOE—whether it was to help create national service, move national legislation, or to say that in our schools we should come to understand the need to teach respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship—wow, these were values that should be not only in our schools but throughout our country.

JOE has been so faithful to his religious beliefs. He has also been faithful to the Constitution he was sworn to uphold and to the people of Connecticut. I want him to know we so appreciate his service to Connecticut and to the country.

I wanted to be sure that the day would not end without me acknowledging these wonderful people who have given a big part of their lives to making this country a better place. I want to, in the most heartfelt way—I am so sorry we did not have a bipartisan dinner or party to be able to express this. I would have liked to have been in the same room, breaking bread with them, in order to be able to tell them how much we appreciate them, across party lines, across those lines that ordinarily divide us. They came from different parts of the country, they arrived in the Senate with different objectives, they will leave under different circumstances. But I want to again let them know that each and every one of them had a positive impact on me and I think a wonderful impact on the future of this country. So I wish them well. God bless and Godspeed.

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. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### FILIBUSTER REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, over the past few weeks, we have been discussing a plan by the Democratic leadership to break the rules of the Senate in order to change the rules of the Senate; in other words, the nuclear option. This plan would break their very clear commitment, which was given at the end of 2006 when they were still serving in the minority, to respect the rights of the minority. It would break their promise to follow the Golden Rule, and it would break their pledge to never, ever use the nuclear option to break the Senate rules.

They have governed in a much different way. Their actions yesterday on the pending bill related to the Transaction Account Guarantee Program illustrate well the heavyhanded "my way or the highway" manner of running the Senate.

Senate Republicans voted overwhelmingly to get on this bill—voted

overwhelmingly to get on the bill. We soon found out, however, that no good deed goes unpunished. Less than a minute after agreeing to adopt a motion to proceed to the bill, the Democratic majority filled the amendment tree to prevent any Senator, Republican or Democrat, from offering any amendments.

Republicans have significant, on-point amendments we would like to offer. For example, Senator CORKER has an amendment that requires the FDIC to charge the full premium necessary to cover the cost of this insurance. Senator VITTER has a similar amendment. Senator CORKER also has an amendment that would make participation in the TAG Program voluntary so banks don't have to pay premiums for insurance they don't use. Senator WICKER has an amendment that would limit the term and exposure of the extension of the TAG Program.

Other Members on both sides of the aisle have additional amendments that are relevant to this bill. No Senators, however, Republican or Democrat, will get to offer any of these amendments because of the autocratic manner in which the Democratic majority is handling this legislation, which is, by the way, the same way they have handled the previous bills nearly 70 times.

Within 2 minutes, after blocking out all amendments, the Democratic leadership filed cloture on the bill so our friends could end debate on this legislation before it even began. This procedural hard ball, like blocking out all amendments by filling the amendment tree, is all too common.

This is the 107th time the Democratic majority has moved to cut off debate on a matter, be it a bill, an amendment, or a conference report, on the very same day—the very same day the Senate began considering the matter. And to boot, this is a bill that never went through committee. Like so many other bills the Senate has considered under the Democratic majority, it was written behind closed doors. This has happened nearly 70 times as well.

In short, what happened on this bill is a prime example of the Democratic leadership's hat trick: bypass the committee process to write a bill behind closed doors; prevent anyone, Republican or Democrat, from representing their constituents by offering an amendment; and then move to end debate on the bill—again, this is a bill that never went through committee and that no one was allowed to amend—on the very same day the Senate takes up the bill. The Democratic leadership, no doubt, likes running the Senate this way because it gives them nearly total control—nearly total control—or, as they prefer to describe it, this approach is "efficient." Efficient. Now that they are no longer in the minority, this is what they believe the Senate should aspire to be.

One can describe this heavyhanded approach in a lot of ways, but you can't say it comports with their promise to