

risks, contaminated water supplies, and even tragic deaths caused by our inaction.

So when someone asks whether EWP is necessary or critical, the answer emphatically is yes! For many of our communities in Colorado, this is their #1 priority in Congress and I'm not going to let their critical needs go unmet. I ask each of my colleagues to support this important funding in the bill before us today.

I thank you for your attention and request that my statement appear in the appropriate place in the RECORD.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill for Hurricane Sandy. This is a critically important bill for the States that were affected by this storm—not only New York and New Jersey, which saw almost unimaginable devastation and loss of life, but States like my home State of Rhode Island, which experienced significant damage.

There has been a long tradition in the Senate in working together to respond to major disasters in our States. The Appropriations Committee has been an important venue for the kind of bipartisan cooperation that has made these efforts possible. In large part that has been the result of the efforts of members like our late-Chairman Dan Inouye who created, by his example, an environment of comity and respect. That has been the unique ethos of our committee. Under the leadership of our new chairwoman, Senator MIKULSKI, it will continue.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, I also want to take a moment to talk about the \$1.45 billion included in the bill for environmental recovery and restoration needs.

We must fund recovery efforts and rebuild public facilities that were damaged. But we also need to look ahead to projects that will allow our communities and our public lands to withstand future storms and natural disasters. I am pleased that the Interior section of this bill addresses both needs.

The bill contains \$435 million in essential funding to rebuild national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, and other public facilities damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

I particularly want to call attention to the \$348 million included to fund immediate construction needs at more than 25 Park Service units that were damaged during the storm. These funds will help the Park Service take necessary steps to reopen a number of heavily visited units to the public—including the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, which suffered extensive damage during the storm.

We need to get this work started now so that we can get these parks reopened. And because the need is so great—the amount requested by the President is nearly five times the annual line-item construction budget—it's imperative that we give the service

the funds in this supplemental as soon as possible.

I also want to note that the bill also provides \$78 million for immediate reconstruction and recovery needs for the more than 30 wildlife refuges that also sustained tremendous damage during the storm.

These funds will be used for emergency stabilization needs, to replace or reconstruct facilities, roads, and trails, and to fund improvements needed to lessen anticipated damage from future storms.

The bill also provides \$810 million for the EPA State Revolving Fund programs, including \$700 million for clean water needs and \$110 million for drinking water needs, for States that faced the greatest impact from Hurricane Sandy. These funds will complement funds from other Federal agencies and provide targeted funding to upgrade water infrastructure to protect against future flooding, storm damage, and other natural disasters.

Already, there is a huge estimated need for these funds. In fact, EPA estimates that there are approximately 700 drinking water and wastewater facilities in States affected by Sandy that need to make infrastructure upgrades that will make them less susceptible to flooding and extreme weather events.

This is exactly the kind of work that needs to be undertaken so that we can get ahead of the curve and prepare for the next storm or natural disaster. I understand that there are some who believe that some of these investments do not constitute an emergency, but as those who lived in the path of storms from Andrew to Katrina to Sandy can attest, there is no time to waste or wait. I hope that this chamber can move swiftly to pass this supplemental appropriations bill.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

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

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Friday, December 1, when the Senate resumes consideration of H.R. 1, the legislative vehicle for the Sandy supplemental, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendments to the bill under the previous order; that all remaining time under the previous order with respect to the amendments be yielded back; that there be 2 minutes equally divided prior to each vote, with the exception of the following: 4 minutes equally divided prior to each of the votes in relation to the Coburn amendments; 10 minutes equally divided prior to the votes in relation to each of the Paul amendments; 8 minutes equally

divided prior to the vote in relation to the McCain amendment No. 3355; and 10 minutes equally divided prior to the vote in relation to the Lee amendment; and that all other provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I said December 1—wishful thinking. The order should say Friday, December 28.

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

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

DANIEL AKAKA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the great State of Hawaii has been represented in the United States Senate by two of the longest serving Senators, and they happen to have shared the name Daniel. This year, Senator AKAKA—with more than 3 decades of service in Congress—now the Senior Senator from Hawaii will return to his native State and enjoy retirement.

Senator AKAKA has represented the people of Hawaii in a variety of ways. Most recently, as Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, he has worked tirelessly to support vital programs that provided education, healthcare, housing and other basic services for tribes across the country. Having attended college on the GI bill, he has been an advocate for improving education for all students. He also has been a strong supporter of veterans and a proponent of protections for whistleblowers seeking to expose waste, fraud and abuse in government.

On a personal note, I have always appreciated Senator AKAKA's strong support for the National Guard, and in particular the Hawaii Guard. His military roots go back to his own distinguished service in World War II. But he was one of the earliest and most senior adopters of the Guard empowerment legislation when I teamed with Senator Bond, Senator GRAHAM, and so many others to enact. Senator AKAKA stood with the men and women of the National Guard in demanding representation among the Nation's most senior

military advisory body. This stand was not an easy one to take. He was, in fact, the most senior Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee to co-sponsor the Leahy-Graham bill, and his support sent a powerful statement that some of our most knowledgeable Senators with the specific responsibility of overseeing our armed services recognized that it was time to give the Guard a stronger voice. Among his many other achievements, Senator AKAKA will be remembered for his strong support of and friendship with the Guard.

Senator AKAKA has brought a calm and insightful presence to his work and the people of Hawaii are fortunate to have had such a great representative in both the House and the Senate. I wish Senator AKAKA and his family the best in his retirement from Congress.

KENT CONRAD

Mr. President, for more than 2 decades, Senator KENT CONRAD has represented the people of North Dakota in the United States Senate.

I have had the privilege to serve with several hundred senators since I came to the Senate nearly 38 years ago. The list is short for those who are extraordinary both for their talents, and for their personal friendship. KENT CONRAD is on that list. In fact, he defines it in many ways. Senator CONRAD has reached across the aisle and demonstrated what bipartisanship truly means.

Rooted in his days as a tax commissioner in North Dakota, Senator CONRAD has been a leading voice in Congress in difficult and complex budget debates. His floor charts are legendary, explaining complicated fiscal matters in terms many others can understand. As Chairman of the Budget Committee, and as a senior member of the Finance Committee, he has been a key player in the fiscal debates that have dominated the discourse in Washington as the country has recovered from the Great Recession. He has led bipartisan efforts to reduce the deficit, and helped create the 2007 taskforce with Republican Senator Judd Gregg to address long-term fiscal challenges. Senator CONRAD has also been dedicated to advancing American interests abroad. I have been fortunate to travel with Senator CONRAD and his wife overseas, most recently to the Eurozone, where he again brought his expertise in economic, budgetary and fiscal policies to the table as we discussed the potential U.S. impacts of the European Union's financial crisis.

He has always put North Dakota first, but Senator CONRAD has never neglected the needs of other parts of the country. He is a champion of the farm bill, and understands the details and nuances of agriculture commodity programs perhaps better than any other member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Whether fighting for North Dakota's farmers, or fighting for the Nation's fiscal health, he has been a great partner. I was particularly moved

by his support for Vermont in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene.

Senator CONRAD has been one of the most important voices in the United States Senate for the past 25 years. He is one of the giants of the Chamber today. We will miss his expertise, but we know our friendships will continue. Both Marcelle and I wish our friends KENT and his wife, Lucy, the best.

JOE LIEBERMAN

Mr. President, a Senator of 24 years, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN this year retires from this Chamber. He has represented the people of Connecticut for years, first as a State Senator, and then as the State's Attorney General.

Senator LIEBERMAN has been a constant voice in national security matters. I worked with him in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, to establish the Department of Homeland Security, and since then, he has served as the top Democrat on the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. He has worked to strengthen the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the aftermath of disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I worked with Senator LIEBERMAN in 2002 on the E-Government Act, a key privacy law that required the government to improve access to information on the Internet. A chief architect of that bill, it has become an important transparency law and a valuable tool in protecting individual privacy protections.

Senator LIEBERMAN has been a dedicated proponent of examining the impacts of climate change. He has worked to find a compromise to move the Senate forward on meaningful climate change and cap-and-trade legislation. And, despite Connecticut's small dairy industry, Senator LIEBERMAN has been a true partner in advancing the needs of dairy farmers in Vermont and across the country.

Senator LIEBERMAN has earned the respect of both Democrats and Republicans. Like so many other retiring Senators, he has urged the Senate to pursue avenues of bipartisanship. The bipartisan legacy he leaves is one example we can all follow moving forward. I wish him and his wife, Hadasah, the best in his retirement.

JEFF BINGAMAN

Mr. President, born in Texas and raised in New Mexico, Senator JEFF BINGAMAN for nearly 30 years has represented the State he has been proud to call home. Lawyer, advocate, environmental stalwart these are just a few of the terms that can be used to describe Senator BINGAMAN.

A longtime public servant, Senator BINGAMAN has served his Nation in the Army Reserves, in his State as an Attorney General, and, since 1983, has served the people of New Mexico in the United States Senate. Along the way, he has earned a reputation for being fair and bipartisan no small feat in today's polarized Congress.

Senator BINGAMAN has been a fierce advocate for the environment, and has

worked hard to expand conservation and end tax breaks for big oil companies. I was proud to work with him on legislation to increase the production of biofuels and to modernize the Federal Government's approach to protecting the environment. As chairman of the Senate's Energy and Natural Resources Committee, he has worked tirelessly to advance energy independence, an issue so important to many, including those in New Mexico.

A supporter of a comprehensive approach to reforming our immigration system, Senator BINGAMAN has supported a responsible and thoughtful approach to protecting our Nation's borders. Like me, he opposed ill-advised legislation which was regrettably enacted in 2006 to build electronic and other forms of surveillance along every land and maritime border. A Senator of a southern State, Senator BINGAMAN opposed the effort to construct a costly fence along our southern border.

Senator BINGAMAN has been a force here in Washington, but he has never lost sight of the needs of the constituents at home that he represents. He has worked to secure Federal funds for critical needs in New Mexico, and for education development and transportation improvements.

JEFF's moderate temperament has led to many successes both in the halls of Congress, and in his home State. I wish him and his wife Anne all the best in retirement.

HERB KOHL

Mr. President, the people of Wisconsin have elected and reelected Senator HERB KOHL to represent them in the United States Senate four times. Since coming to the Senate in 1989, I have been honored to serve with him on the Senate Judiciary Committee, where his commitment to matters involving antitrust, juvenile justice, and technology has afforded us many opportunities to work together. We have partnered in other important areas, too from our states' shared interest in a vibrant and supported dairy industry, to important housing assistance.

Everyone likes Senator KOHL. He is a consensus builder, and is always seeking a bipartisan solution. That approach led to a bipartisan investigation in the Judiciary Committee over Ruby Ridge. It led to enactment of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act, and economic espionage bills.

Senator KOHL has been a constant champion for the nation's dairy farmers from those in Wisconsin to those in Vermont. His Superb Milk House at the Wisconsin State Fair is a hit every year. A tradition he began in 1990, it still sells glasses of milk for just 25 cents. I was delighted to hear he intends to keep the Milk House running even after he leaves the Senate. Wisconsin and Vermont dairy farmers have not always agreed on how best to support the industry, but Senator KOHL's commitment has never wavered.

As chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, Senator KOHL has

kept the needs of some of the most vulnerable around us the elderly front and center during his time in the Senate. His support for the Housing Assistance Council, which helps improve housing conditions for the rural poor with an emphasis on the poorest of the poor has been steadfast, and I was pleased to work with him to ensure that in an age without earmarks, this important council was qualified to compete for Federal financial support. He has been a longtime partner in rural housing issues a partnership I will miss.

Senator KOHL has worked tirelessly for the people of Wisconsin both as a Senator and as a philanthropist. Since 1990, he has provided annual grants totaling \$400,000 to Wisconsin students, teachers, and schools through the HERB KOHL Educational Foundation Achievement Award Program.

When Senator KOHL announced his retirement, he stated that he never believed it was his Senate seat, but that it belonged to the people of Wisconsin, and that is just who HERB KOHL is. Even in retirement, I have no doubt he will remain dedicated to the people of Wisconsin. Serving with him for more than two decades has been an honor and a privilege. The Senate will miss him.

JIM WEBB

Mr. President, although he has served just one term in the U.S. Senate, retiring Senator JIM WEBB is no stranger to public service. A highly decorated combat veteran of Vietnam, JIM WEBB's prior public service as an Assistant Secretary of Defense and a former Secretary of the Navy uniquely suited him as a fierce defender of our troops serving overseas, and when they come back home.

Senator WEBB has been a positive force on a number of issues, and particularly through his roles on the Foreign Relations Committee, the Armed Services Committee, and the Veterans' Affairs Committee. His commitment to our Nations' veterans and to supporting and strengthening our military has been a cornerstone of his Senate career.

I worked with Senator WEBB on a number of issues in the last 6 years, especially on prison reform and the criminal justice commission. His initiative is something the Senate and our judicial system, should follow and set as a guide.

Senator WEBB brought a unique perspective to the Senate based on his years of dedicated public service. He has been a powerful advocate for military and veterans' issues and criminal justice reform, all while promoting Virginia's best interests. I wish him and his family the very best in the future.

BEN NELSON

Mr. President, as a Senator from a rural State, supporting our Nation's farmers is something close to my heart. Senator BEN NELSON shares that commitment, and has been a long-time champion of legislation to protect

American agriculture and our Nation's farms in a rough economy. Senator NELSON's work for rural communities has benefited his home State of Nebraska, but his support of agriculture has helped Vermonters, too. These are among the legislative issues on which Senator NELSON has had an impact since he came to the Senate in 2001.

As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Senator NELSON has been an active participant as we have tried to move the 2012 Farm Bill through Congress. One of the most pressing pieces of legislation before us today, he has fought tirelessly for Nebraska's interests in that bill, as well as the interests of the Nation's agricultural industry as a whole.

While he has worked on a number of legislative matters in the last decade, I particularly appreciated Senator NELSON's support for my effort to give the National Guard a seat at the table of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a former Governor. He understood that this multi-year effort was done to recognize that the men and women of the National Guard serve our country with unmatched loyalty and that they and their families make sacrifices every day. He recognized that they are indeed deserving of full representation at the highest levels of the Pentagon. In 2010, Senator BEN NELSON was awarded the Harry S. Truman Award for his commendable work with the Guard. Since the National Guard has taken on an increased role in overseas conflicts, Senators like BEN NELSON have stepped up to give them the recognition and support they deserve.

I commend BEN's loyalty to Nebraska and to economic sustainability across the country. His dedication to sustainable energy is rare in our modern political climate. Rather than folding to the issues that divide us and ignoring the future of our farms and environment, Senator NELSON has taken a strong stance on controversial and difficult issues and has managed to open the minds of many of his colleagues with time, bringing people together around the possibility of creating positive change. Through it all, he has kept the needs of his State in mind, even as he has worked to create a brighter future for the entire country.

Senator NELSON is an honest man, a level-headed public servant, and a friend to many. True to his roots, he has built a legacy in the Senate that will last after he has moved on from the halls of the Capitol. I wish him the best in his retirement from Congress.

JON KYL

Mr. President, there are many times when those of us in the Senate disagree. It is when we can find ways to work together, across party lines, to advance meaningful legislation that we can really make a difference. One of the things I have always appreciated about Senator JON KYL is his commitment to his word. This year will mark his last in the U.S. Senate. I have wel-

comed his partnership on many issues, from cyber legislation to matters protecting crime victims. He was a key ally in our efforts to make the first meaningful reforms to the Nation's patent system in nearly 60 years. And we have worked together on issues relating to National security and border security.

Fewer Senators are more hard working than JON KYL. He is a constant presence in the Judiciary Committee, where he has served as the top Republican on the Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee. He is active in the Finance Committee. And of course, he holds a key position within his caucus, serving as the Republican Whip.

I have, of course, most closely worked with Senator KYL in his nearly 2 decades of service on the Judiciary Committee. There, he has championed a number of important issues, from crime victims' rights to antiterrorism legislation. We have been close partners on intellectual property legislation, from patent reform to copyright and trademark protections. And, even in the most contentious of national security issues, we have worked to find common ground on such issues as the PATRIOT Act.

On Capitol Hill, Senator KYL is known throughout the Senate for his dedication and work ethic. He is a great ally and a formidable adversary; in Congress, there is often no higher praise. He is a good personal friend and, I wish him and his family all the best as he takes on his next challenge.

RICHARD LUGAR

Mr. President, I have served with hundreds of Senators in my nearly 38 years representing Vermont in Washington. Few embody the statesmanship that you find in Senator RICHARD LUGAR. For more than 36 years, Senator LUGAR has represented the State of Indiana in the United States Senate—the longest-serving Republican Senator here today. It has been an honor, a privilege and a joy to work with him to advance so many important legislative issues.

Senator LUGAR exemplifies the ideal of bipartisanship that is too often lacking today in Washington. Although we come from different political views, Senator LUGAR and I worked shoulder-to-shoulder to reach across the aisle to find compromise and common ground on two Farm Bills—the Leahy-Lugar bill, and the Lugar-Leahy bill. That collaborative effort, which led to reforms at the Department of Agriculture resulting in the savings of billions of dollars, is an example of how well the Senate can function when bipartisanship is the order of business. Whether he chaired the Agriculture Committee, or I did, we always found a way to work together.

Perhaps Senator LUGAR is most well-known for yet another bipartisan effort, the 1991 Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction. Nunn-Lugar was enacted to protect Americans from the threat of nuclear weapons in the

former Soviet Union. Ever since it became law, Senator LUGAR has continued his efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear annihilation. In 2007, after a trip to Russia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine, Senator LUGAR and then-Senator Barack Obama crafted the Lugar-Obama Proliferation and Threat Reduction Initiative to decrease the number of hidden traditional weapons around the world. Senator LUGAR's ability to build strong relationships with party opposites such as President Obama resulted in legislation that benefits citizens of Indiana, but also the entire Nation.

As a leading member and former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator LUGAR has championed human rights around the world. Most recently he advocated aggressively for ratification of the bipartisan Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A recognized leader in international affairs, Senator LUGAR has supported causes eradicating hunger, to combatting terrorism wherever it occurs. He has promoted sound, reasonable immigration reforms to encourage the best and brightest to come to America. And he has warned of the catastrophic risks of climate change.

Earlier this year, Senator LUGAR and I reached a pair of milestones together. I was honored to cast my 14,000th vote in the United States Senate. I was delighted that Senator LUGAR, on the same vote, reached the 13,000 marker. Ours has been a partnership of more than three decades, and to share this milestone with Senator LUGAR was a memory I will cherish.

A couple of years ago, DICK and I found ourselves sitting down together in the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing room, speaking with a reporter about the importance of bipartisanship in Congress. We both recalled with fondness our earliest days in the Senate, sitting on the farthest ends of the dais, and struggling to hear what the most senior members of the panel were saying. We suspected—no doubt correctly—that this was not happening by accident. From those days sitting together was born a friendship that has spanned three decades. In his farewell in this Chamber, Senator LUGAR cautioned that many in Congress “have not lived up to the expectations of our constituents to make excellence in governance our top priority.” Every day in this Chamber, DICK LUGAR made excellence his top priority. He is a pillar of the Senate, a mentor to many, and a role model to those to come. And I will miss my friend.

OLYMPIA SNOWE

Mr. President, in today's U.S. Senate, moderates are few. At the end of this Congress, we will lose another: Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE, who has served the State of Maine in the U.S. Senate for nearly 2 decades. She has spent nearly her entire adult life in public service, and the people of Maine have revered her dedication to her home State and to civic engagement.

Just the 23rd woman to serve in the United States Senate, Senator SNOWE has risen through the ranks in her tenure in this body, most recently serving as the top Republican on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. There she has focused on promoting women in small business. She was instrumental in establishing Women's Business Centers through the Small Business Administration, a network of nearly 100 centers designed to level the playing field for women looking to start a small business. Most recently, she has worked to advance legislation to establish a task force specifically devoted to women entrepreneurs.

Senator SNOWE has been a great friend to the environment as well. She has worked closely with me to protect our national forests and environment. She has partnered with me to strengthen the Forest Legacy Program—important to both Vermont and Maine—as well as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. She has been a stalwart advocate for the Community Development Block Grant program, and for years, she and I teamed together to protect this important community development program. Senator SNOWE has been a strong supporter of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP. The shared challenges of our States—rural, New England States have given us many reasons to work together, and our partnership in these issues is one that I will miss.

Notably, Senator SNOWE, at a time when so many simply tow the party line, never feared voting her conscience over her political affiliation. Her support for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which spurred development amid the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, was instrumental in funneling necessary resources to the States. She supported advancing comprehensive health care reform legislation to the Senate floor, so the Senate as a whole could debate the issue. And she has stood up for women in important health care choices.

When Senator SNOWE announced earlier this year that she intended to retire, she lamented the partisan shift she has seen in Congress. During her long career in public service, Senator SNOWE put her State and the Nation first. It's a lesson we can all follow. I wish OLYMPIA the best in her retirement and I will truly miss serving with her. Her farewell speech to the Senate should be required reading in every High School and college—civics and government classes.

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

Mr. President, when the 112th Congress adjourns, Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON will retire, having been the 22nd woman to serve in the United States Senate. With nearly 20 years of service to this Chamber, Senator HUTCHISON has been a pioneer in her home State of Texas. The first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from that

State, her record of public service began long before she came to Washington.

Senator HUTCHISON's dedication to her constituents, and to the advancement of the Nation, has been easy to see. When she helped to establish the Academy of Medicine, Engineering, and Science of Texas, TAMEST in 2004, she put a spotlight on the importance of encouraging advancements in science and of supporting research and development. She has understood that protecting our Nation's ability to innovate is as vital to our economic security as anything else.

I am proud to have worked with Senator HUTCHISON on a variety of pieces of legislation over the years, having served with her on several subcommittees of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Among our greatest achievements, I believe was our partnership on federal AMBER Alert legislation, which won unanimous support in the Senate and which was enacted in 2003. The AMBER Alert Act was a signature achievement, and an example of what can be done when partisanship is cast aside, and we work together.

Senator HUTCHISON has worked tirelessly to advocate for her State and for the good of the Nation. I wish her and her family all the best.

SCOTT BROWN

Mr. President, Senator SCOTT BROWN came to the Senate in an untraditional manner: winning a special election to fill the seat left by one of the giants of the Senate, Ted Kennedy. While his tenure has been just 3 years, I have appreciated Senator BROWN's willingness to work across the aisle on two very important issues: reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, and working to end human trafficking.

It happens that I have authored legislation to address these two very issues, and so it has been through the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act that I have seen Senator BROWN take a dedicated approach to protecting victims of violence. He is a cosponsor of both these bills, a strong supporter of the goals behind them, and a vocal proponent of their enactment.

Senator BROWN has also been a friend of National Guard. Himself a Guardsman for over 30 years, he was one 68 cosponsors of my Guard Empowerment Act, to give the head of the National Guard a seat with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where decisions are made every day about our Nation's military, including the National Guard and Reserve. As a Guardsman himself, he understands the strains placed on families here at home when the Guard, like any unit of the military, is deployed, as has happened so many times in the last decade. I appreciated Senator BROWN's support on this important law.

Senator BROWN has charted his own path in his short time here in the Senate, and I expect the ventures he undertook while serving here will continue. I wish him and his family the best.

THANKING LUTHERAN CHURCH CHARITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this past week we have all watched, grief-stricken, the terrible school shooting in Newtown, CT, and the heart-breaking funerals of those beautiful little children. There are no words to adequately express our sorrow for those touched by this tragedy. But there is an organization that is helping to bring comfort and healing to Newtown in a way that requires no words.

One day after the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, a group of golden retrievers from the Chicago area made a cross-country journey to provide solace to the Newtown community. The Lutheran Church Charities sent five of their "comfort dogs" to help console grieving family members and others touched by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Accompanying these special dogs are handlers who are trained to speak or pray with mourners or simply to sit quietly with them.

In all, nine comfort dogs from Lutheran Church Charities have helped to comfort Newtown residents. Some of these remarkable dogs attended President Obama's speech at an interfaith gathering at Newtown High School, another comforted mourners at Newtown's Christ the King Lutheran Church, the location of funerals for two of the slain children. The dogs even made an appearance on CNN with host Don Lemon.

This is how Tim Hetzner, president of Lutheran Church Charities, explained the dogs' healing powers: "Dogs are nonjudgmental," he says, "They are loving. They are accepting of anyone. It creates the atmosphere for people to share."

That is exactly what they have done in Newtown.

A woman visiting a Newtown memorial told one reporter: "It's a very solemn time. With the dogs here, it seems like it's a little ray of sunshine."

A child from Newtown said simply that the dogs "help you get over how sad it is."

Sadly, the comfort dog program began after another gun tragedy. In 2008, after a gunman killed five students at Northern Illinois University, a group of dog caretakers associated with Lutheran Church Charities visited the NIU campus in hopes of offering a healing distraction to students. The trip was so successful that a few weeks later students petitioned university leaders to bring the comfort dogs back.

The initiative has since grown from a handful of dogs in the Chicago area to 60 dogs in 6 states. Comfort dogs have traveled across the Nation to console

people in the aftermath of major tragedies such as Hurricane Sandy and the tornado that hit Joplin, MO.

When the K-9 comfort dogs are not responding to a tragedy, they visit people in hospitals, nursing homes, and parks. Each dog has a Facebook page, Twitter account, and email so those who meet the dogs can keep in touch.

The unconditional love of comfort dogs has helped countless children and adults to cope with tragedy and begin to heal from their suffering. On behalf of a heartbroken but grateful Nation, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of the comfort dogs of Lutheran Church Charities especially Abbi, Barnabas, Chewie, Chloe, Hannah, Luther, Prince, Ruthie, and Shami—and to their handlers.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS COWART

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee who will be retiring at the end of this session of Congress. Her name is Christine Cowart, and for the past 6 years, she has served as the Chief Clerk of the Committee. She had previously served a term of 8 years as Chief Clerk under Senator Sam Nunn.

I know that 14 years sounds like a lot of time to most people, but that barely scratches the surface of Chris' service to the Senate. In fact, Chris holds a special place in the record books. In an organization like the Senate, known for some long-serving members, Chris would fall within the top ten list of longevity for senators, and no member currently serving has been here in the Senate longer than Chris.

The mere fact that she will be completing almost 41 years of service to the Senate is truly a remarkable accomplishment, especially in today's world where changing jobs has become the norm. And if that were all of her record, that would be amazing. But that is only part of the story. Chris made invaluable contributions to getting each of 41 of the 51 total National Defense Authorization Acts we have done annually since 1961. As Chief Clerk, it was her duty to shepherd the Armed Services Committee's annual set of hearings, meetings, and briefings that lead up to the DOD Authorization Act each year. Her duties also included showing the ropes to new senators and new staffers alike.

Chris took to heart the ideals of service she dedicated almost all of her adult life to service to her country and to the Senate. I remember Chris recounting how her father had escorted her here to the Russell Senate Office Building for her first interview with the Committee in the summer of 1972, shortly after she graduated from college. She said she didn't have any difficulty in deciding what to do after her father told her, "Take the job."

Chris' father was a career Navy man, having flown maritime patrol aircraft

for the Navy during World War II and thereafter. He instilled in Chris the value of patriotism and service to country that she so exemplifies in her life.

During her service to the Committee, she served as mentor, confidant and advisor to the staff as they experienced weddings, divorces, births and deaths.

Chris has been a rock for the Committee, and I know I speak for all of the members and staff when I say, "Chris, thank you for your service to the Armed Services Committee, to the Senate and to the country. You have set a standard of dedication and professionalism for all of us, and we will miss you!"

BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss our Nation's need to adopt a balanced budget amendment and to bring the Senate's attention to the Alabama Legislature's recent call for Congress to send such an amendment to the States for ratification. This is a thoughtful and well-reasoned resolution. Many other States have made similar resolutions. Our Nation is on the precipice of the most predictable fiscal disaster in our history and Congress has failed to act to remove the danger. U.S. gross Federal debt is now over \$16.3 trillion; U.S. debt per person is over \$53,000, higher than that of Greece; and for the fourth straight year, our Nation's deficit will exceed \$1 trillion. The Federal Government cannot continue spending more than it takes in, and the people of Alabama clearly know that.

The American people understand the necessity of living within one's means and balancing budgets. We see that as American families across the Nation are working to pay off their debt. In fact, American families have improved their balance sheets by reducing their outstanding credit card debt by 17 percent since 2008, over \$150 billion. The people expect no less of their State governments. Forty-three of the 50 States, including my home State of Alabama, have balanced budget requirements.

Unfortunately, as States and families across the Nation cut spending and balance budgets, the Federal Government continues to spend more and has increased its debt by more than \$4 trillion since 2008. This spending course will at some point wreck our economy, just as it has wrecked that of Greece, Spain, and Italy. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Congress adopt a balanced budget amendment and send it to the States for ratification. The surging debt crisis we face is so significant that we must have a balanced budget constitutional amendment. It has come close to passing before. When Senators and Congressmen have no alternative but to live within their means, like so many of our States, they will figure out a way to do it. But if Congress is not required by the Constitution to