

bulk of the aid people need, without which we will not be able to recover. To be a bride and left at the altar once is bad enough. To be left twice would be unconscionable.

As I said, this is a good step that we are going to pass this \$9 billion flood insurance bill. This is a good but small first step. It is a small downpayment on the much larger amount of aid we need to get through Congress.

Let me tell you what is not in this bill. What is not in this bill is help for every homeowner who does not have flood insurance and lost their home or suffered major damage.

Homeowners are waiting for Congress to pass relief the way we did for Irene and Katrina and so many other disasters so they can get a contractor to sign a contract, get a bank to make a loan until they know that the Federal Government will be there to reimburse, as it always has in the past.

What is not in this bill is aid to small businesses, small businesspeople who are hanging by their fingernails, who might not be able to restart their businesses unless there is Federal aid, which was already in the Senate bill. Unless it comes back from the House and we are able to pass it in the Senate, they will be hurt.

What is not in this bill is dollars to rebuild our highways and, most importantly, our mass transit systems that were flood, damaged. The MTA alone has taken out a \$5 billion loan, but it will be in real financial jeopardy unless it is assured that it will be reimbursed for all the damage that Sandy caused to our railroads and our tunnels and our mass transit system—our amazing mass transit system that brings 3½ million people off and on Manhattan Island every single day.

What is not in this bill is help to bring the electricity system back up to snuff so there will not be major blackouts, so people can be assured of their electricity.

What is not in this bill is help for all of the communities that laid out hundreds of millions and billions of dollars for the cleanup. Their taxpayers will foot the bill unless Congress does what it has always done: step to the plate when a major disaster occurs and have the Federal Government help the locality. There has been a wisdom for 100 years that when an area is afflicted by a disaster, we unite as a nation and come together and help that part of the country whether it is New Mexico or California or Louisiana or Florida or Missouri or North Dakota or New York or New Jersey.

This bill is a first step to deal with flood insurance. It is the easiest part. The hard stuff is still ahead of us. We await the House returning in a week and a half, and we hope and expect, in fact, that they will vote the full \$51 billion remainder. We hope and expect, in fact, that they will not put in legislative language that prevents money from getting to homeowners and communities that need it desperately right away.

The draft we have seen contains some major changes from the Senate bill that would make it very difficult for NIH, the Army Corps, and other parts of the government to spend the dollars that are needed efficiently and quickly and to place them where they go. We beseech the House to finish its business, to finish the major part of its business, and approve the \$51 billion that will make up the rest of the \$60.

We beseech them not to hamstring the local homeowners and businesses and governments with language that would prevent recovery. We beseech them to move quickly. Of course, the ideal would be for them to pass the same bill that the Senate passed in the waning hours of the last session. If they cannot, we will have to get legislation through the body again. But through the generosity of the majority leader, he has assured us it will be the first order of business when we return. So we have to move forward.

As we have seen, this is not going to be easy. There are many bumps in the road and obstacles that we cannot yet see. For sure they will arise and for sure we will have to grapple with them.

This vote needs to be the beginning of the process. It cannot certainly be the end, and it certainly cannot be the middle. We cannot just pass the \$9 billion bill and then say that is it. We cannot let the House pass this and rest on its laurels. We in New York and New Jersey cannot let our guard down. Not until the full \$60 billion arrives in New York and New Jersey can we stop working. So I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and then alert them to keep the victims of Sandy in New York, New Jersey, and elsewhere in their thoughts so that we can continue to support the region when we return.

I yield the floor, and 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.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the years I have served in legislative bodies, which is quite a long time now, it is interesting to see how different people approach the legislative process. I have learned over the years there is nothing more important than people working hard. You have to be tenacious to get legislation passed.

The leader of passing Sandy over here—and I am confident when we get back in a couple of weeks after the House works on theirs, the same dynamic will be here—the senior Senator from New York has worked tirelessly to get legislation passed. He has led a team effort of Senators from New Jersey and his partner, Senator GILLIBRAND, but the leader, the quarterback, has been the Senator from New York.

The work he has done not only in the Senate, but having the many years of experience he had in the House of Representatives, the Presiding Officer, the senior Senator from New York, worked day and night making phone calls, personal contacts with people in New York and New Jersey who could call House Members and have them pass this legislation.

On the way back from the joint session dealing with the electoral vote count, he walked up and grabbed me—did not grab me, but we talked for several minutes walking back to the Senate—the majority leader from the House of Representatives. He worked extremely hard on this. He worked hard on it. I indicated to him that I had received calls from people in New York who appreciated very much his efforts to try to get this thing passed.

I really do believe it is important that I have the record reflect the reason we have gotten as far as we have on Sandy is because of the senior Senator from New York. It is too bad that it has taken so long. When we had that devastation from Katrina, we were there within days taking care of Mississippi, Alabama, and especially Louisiana—within days. We are now past 2 months with the people of New York and New Jersey.

The people of New Orleans and that area, they were hurt but nothing in comparison to what happened to the people in New York and New Jersey. Almost 1 million people have lost their homes; 1 million people lost their homes. That is homes, that is not people in those homes. So I think it is just unfortunate that we do not have the relief for New York and New Jersey and the rest already. It has to be done. We have to meet the needs of the American people when an act of God occurs.

So I, on behalf of the entire Senate, and certainly my Democratic caucus, express my appreciation to the legislative initiative and the legislative expertise of my friend from New York, an experienced legislator in the State of New York, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. He has done a masterful job.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

WIND ENERGY TAX CREDIT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, today marks my 28th time here on the Senate floor to talk about the Production Tax Credit for wind energy. Twenty-seven other times I stood here—oftentimes joined by like-minded colleagues from around the country—to urge Congress to extend this vital tax credit, which has helped the wind

industry create tens of thousands of jobs and spur tens of billions of dollars in investment. And Coloradans have been with me the whole way.

Well, Mr. President, 27 must be a lucky number—because today, I am thrilled to use my time to thank my colleagues for making the extension of the PTC a reality. Earlier this week, Congress came together across party lines to do the right thing to assist our fragile economic recovery.

Throughout my previous efforts here on the floor, I talked a lot about jobs. From Colorado to Kansas, Oregon and Maine and the Carolinas, my remarks always came back to one simple but true statement: the PTC equals jobs.

These are good-paying jobs for hard-working Americans. From gearboxes in Georgia to wind blades in Rhode Island to towers in Colorado, the construction of wind turbines has invigorated an entire supply chain. Factories in the Midwest have been retooled to make steel components that are shipped to places like Iowa, where cutting edge composite materials are used to make state of the art blades for turbines that ultimately create wind farms built with labor from local construction workers. That's thousands of jobs across this country.

Wind generates clean, renewable energy, which helps move our country toward a more secure energy future. This is clean, American energy that does not produce carbon dioxide pollution—and by making it here at home, it helps us become less reliant on foreign nations for our energy security.

These wind farms are also paying dividends to towns and counties across America, benefitting the families who live there and the small businesses that operate there. The tax revenues from wind turbines have allowed communities to build new schools and roads, as well as provide other basic services. These additional sources of income have been especially important during the recent economic downturn, where the budgets of many states and rural communities have been stretched thin. Quite simply, wind energy jobs have a positive ripple effect wherever they are.

I am relieved that after months of uncertainty as to whether or not the PTC would be extended, Congress has finally done the commonsense thing, making sure we did not lose this vital tax credit. Although it was my preference to have Congress act much sooner and prevent the thousands of layoffs that resulted from the uncertainty Congress created, I am pleased that we have finally acted for the good of our constituents.

With the passage of the PTC, the wind industry can get back to doing the important work of moving America toward a clean energy future, a direction that will benefit middle-class American workers and ensure America leads the world in clean energy manufacturing, even as foreign competitors like China work to surpass us.

And the final language passed by Congress will have an immediate and positive impact on the construction of new wind farms. This year, projects will be eligible to take advantage of the PTC if construction begins before the end of 2013, rather than racing to complete the project by the end of the year. This commonsense change in the law will encourage larger, longer-term projects over the course of the next few years as opposed to just in 2013, which is particularly important since Congress did not pass the extension until the very last minute.

I was not alone in this fight. Coloradans motivated me to keep up the battle the entire time. And many of my colleagues—both Republicans and Democrats—joined me. In particular, I would like to thank Senator GRASSLEY of Iowa—the “father of the wind PTC”—for his efforts to get this done.

Senator BAUCUS and Senator BINGAMAN have also been long-time champions of the PTC on the Finance Committee, and were an integral part of the fight to extend it. My good friend and colleague from Colorado Senator BENNET has also been a strong supporter of the PTC, joining me in speeches, letters, and legislation. Senator MORAN of Kansas has been right there with us as well.

And many more members from both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol supported these efforts. The broadly bipartisan and bicameral group was driven by a mutual commitment to creating jobs, simultaneously improving our economy and economic competitiveness while moving us toward a more secure energy future.

Despite the importance of the wind PTC extension, there is still much more work to do. This extension only lasts until the end of 2013. So, although we might want to take a breather, we cannot. Instead, we must begin work today on a path forward that will give the wind industry much-needed certainty over the long term. Without certainty, businesses cannot do the long-term planning that is necessary to robustly grow and add good-paying American jobs. And, this time, we cannot wait until the last minute to do it. We must work together to find a plan that allows this industry to reach maturity and thrive while also being fiscally responsible. Yes, that means a gradual phase-out of the wind PTC in the coming years—but my goal is to get Congress to also work together on comprehensive energy legislation that creates long-term certainty for all energy sources. I strongly believe that any national energy policy we develop should reflect the success Colorado has had as an all-of-the-above energy State.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues who worked alongside me to push the wind PTC extension over the finish line. This is hugely important to maintaining American jobs, manufacturing prowess, and energy security. It's a win for Colorado and it's a win for us all.

DYSFUNCTION OF THE SENATE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the dysfunction of the Senate, the rules of this governing body, and what we need to do to change them in order to take on the big challenges we face as a Nation.

These last 2 years have created an unprecedented sense among the American people that Congress isn't measuring up to the needs of our time.

This is especially troubling when we are up against tremendous challenges: the most profound jobs crisis in a generation; skyrocketing income inequality; and a tax system that unfairly rewards the wealthy and well-connected over working Americans who are struggling to make ends meet.

But unfortunately, we can't tackle this jobs crisis or the problem of inequality until this body, our revered Senate, restores the ability to debate, deliberate and decide on strategies to take our Nation forward.

I believe that reforming the filibuster is one of the most critical steps we can take to repair the Senate and rebuild confidence in Congress's ability to govern.

When I first came to the Senate, it was 1976. What I saw then could hardly have been farther from the Senate of today. Routine use of the “filibuster”—or to put it differently, a routine use of an objection to a simple majority vote—has turned the U.S. Senate into a supermajority body.

In short, the U.S. Senate, which once claimed to be “the world's greatest deliberative body,” has possibly become “the world's least deliberative body.” The institution of the Senate will not function again until we end the abuse of the filibuster. We must put an end to the silent, secret filibuster that is paralyzing the Senate.

The use of this objection has expanded dramatically in recent decades. What was once used only to block legislation that conflicted with deep, personal principles is now used as a routine political strategy for deliberate paralysis. In the 6 years Lyndon Baines Johnson was majority leader, he dealt with one filibuster. Leader REID during his 6 years as majority leader: 391.

One casualty of the partisan filibuster is executive branch and judicial nominations. The Senate's power to advise and consent, as provided in the Constitution, was never intended to enable the legislators to inflict deep harm on the other branches of government. Yet that is exactly what has happened. Nearly one out of every eleven judgeships is vacant—triple the rate of 8 years ago. Our court systems are severely strained, with 27 vacancies rated as “judicial emergencies” at the end of 2012.

This is deeply damaging, for several reasons. It prevents the legislature from responding to the Nation's pressing problems and severely hampers the executive and judicial branches, which rely on the Senate to confirm their leaders. Because the Senate is unable