

saw terrible tornadoes in Oklahoma—horrible. I send my condolences to the people who lost loved ones. This is climate change. This is climate change. We were warned about extreme weather—not just hot weather but extreme weather.

When I had the gavel years ago—it has been a while—the scientists started to agree that we would start to see extreme weather. People said: What do you mean? Do you mean it is going to get hot? Yes, it is going to get hot, but we are also going to have snow in the summer in some places. We are going to have terrible storms and tornadoes and all the rest.

We need to protect our people. That is our No. 1 obligation. We have to deal with this threat that is upon us. It is going to get worse and worse through the years.

I certainly hope—and I pray over it—that people will wake up to this and we will start to have support for moving together and at the end of the day it is a win-win-win. We will help save our planet. We will create good-paying jobs right here in America as we move toward clean energy. We will see fewer people with asthma, and we will have a more healthy population.

At the end of the day we will help those in the transition who have to pay a little bit more for their energy. We have it all figured out, how to do that, and no one will be hurt. But right now—I am a very straight from the shoulder person—I can tell you it is not happening, but I feel an obligation to my grandkids to be here every Monday I can be here to put in the RECORD the problems we are facing.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, over the past several weeks the Senate Judiciary Committee has considered the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. In addition to the three hearings the Committee held this year on the need for comprehensive immigration reform, the Committee held an additional three hearings specifically on this legislative proposal after it was introduced. In those legislative hearings we received testimony from 26 witnesses, including the Secretary of Homeland Security, Secretary Napolitano, who spoke at length about the bill would make our country safer and help address the current problems in our immigration system.

The Judiciary Committee has benefited from more process and transparency than any previous Committee consideration of immigration reform. In 1985, the Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration held three hearings on the Immigration Control and Reform Act and heard testimony from 14 witnesses. In 2006 and 2007, the last two times the Senate tried to enact comprehensive immigration reform, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee held no hearings

on his legislative proposal or the McCain-Kennedy proposal or the Kyl-Kennedy formulation.

In 2006, the Republican chairman circulated his legislative proposal just one week before the Committee met to make opening statements. He then revised his legislation and circulated it barely 2 days before the Committee met to begin debate and consider amendments. This year, the Judiciary Committee received the bill text on April 17, and after a period of more than 3 weeks to consider it and draft amendments we began our consideration of amendments to the bill on May 9.

During the Committees consideration of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986 the Committee met four times. We are holding our fourth day of markup today. It is my hope that the Committee will complete our consideration of the bill on Wednesday after 6, extended days of consideration. In 1985, the Committee debated only 11 amendments, adopting 7. The Committee sent the bill to the Senate on as 12-5 vote.

In 2006, the Committee met five times to consider amendments to the Chairman's Securing America's Borders bill, conducted 60 votes and adopted 54 amendments. The bill was then reported to the Senate on a vote of 12 to 6. In 2007, the bill was not considered by the Judiciary Committee at all before floor consideration.

Already this year the Committee has met for 4 days to consider amendments to the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. During just the first three executive sessions, the Committee has considered 99 amendments. Of those 50—more than half—were offered by the Republican minority. During those first 3 days, the Committee debated and voted to accept 67 amendments to the bill. That is already more amendments than were debated in 2006 and 6 times as many amendments as were debated in 1986. Of those accepted, 20 were offered by Republican members. That includes several amendments sponsored by Senator GRASSLEY, Senator CORNYN and a few sponsored by Senator SESSIONS. The Committee has acted in a bipartisan way to accept amendments authored by Senators from both sides of the aisle and by Senators who are proponents of the bill and some by Senators who can fairly be considered opponents of the bill.

The Committee will continue its consideration of the legislation after tonight's votes. As of 4:30 today, we have considered an additional 45 amendments, including 22 offered by Republicans, and 23 offered by Democrats.

One example of the Committee's bipartisan efforts to improve this legislation was offered by Senators HATCH, COONS and KLOBUCHAR, which will increase certain immigration fees and provide 70 percent of the funds collected to the states to improve and enhance the economic competitiveness of the United States by improving

science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and training in the United States. Senator SCHUMER offered a second degree amendment which would direct some of this funding to promote STEM education in groups that are underrepresented in the sciences, such as women and racial minorities. Both amendments were accepted by the Committee by unanimous consent.

The Committee also unanimously approved my amendment to permanently authorize and further strengthen the EB-5 Regional Center Program which will benefit the economy. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services—USCIS—estimates that the EB-5 Regional Center Program has created tens of thousands of American jobs and has attracted more than \$1 billion in investment in communities all across the United States since 2006.

These amendments are just a few of the many offered to promote jobs and innovation in the non-immigration visa provisions in Title IV of the bill. Other bipartisan proposals to provide assistance for American workers to apply for jobs in the technology sector and establish employee reporting requirements to address potential abuse of the visa system have also been adopted.

The Committee has voted to accept amendments offered by nearly every member of the minority on the Judiciary Committee. Senators GRASSLEY, HATCH, SESSIONS, GRAHAM, CORNYN, LEE, and FLAKE have all offered amendments adopted by the Committee to improve the bill. Senators FEINSTEIN, WHITEHOUSE, KLOBUCHAR, FRANKEN, COONS, BLUMENTHAL and HIRONO have also contributed important amendments to improve the legislation. With the adoption of these amendments, the Committee demonstrated its ability to act in a bipartisan manner to improve this historic legislation.

In an unprecedented effort to achieve transparency during the Judiciary Committee's public proceedings, and to ensure the American people could follow the Committee's consideration of the bill, I made public all 301 amendments filed on Tuesday, May 7, by posting them on the Judiciary Committee's website. In real time, as the Committee accepts or rejects amendments, the Committee's website is updated to reflect which amendments are modified, accepted or fail.

The Judiciary Committee's mark up of the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act is not yet finished but we have completed work on two of the four titles of the bill as well as the important "trigger" provisions. We have been able to focus our extensive consideration of this complex bill for three weeks and still achieve a fair and transparent process for Committee consideration. With the help of the Senators who serve so diligently on the Judiciary Committee from both sides of aisle, I hope by the end of this week

that the Committee will have completed its consideration of the legislation and that we will report a comprehensive immigration reform bill to the Senate with the recommendation that it be considered and passed. I look forward to bringing this legislation before the full Senate at the beginning of our next work period.

I note, I hope we will finish that this week. We will go very late tonight, very late tomorrow night, very late Wednesday night, all day Thursday, and all day Friday, if necessary, until we get it finished.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week, the Senate Agriculture Committee once again reported to the full Senate a bipartisan farm bill, and I am pleased the Senate has turned to its consideration this week. I compliment the distinguished chair, Senator STABENOW, who has done Herculean duties. The bill before us represents nearly 2 years of hard work to satisfy the widely varied agricultural interests of this country, while supporting food assistance programs for those in need. The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act will save \$23 billion over 10 years, which is remarkable given the fiscal restraints we face, and was overwhelmingly supported by the members of the agriculture committee by a vote of 15-5.

Unfortunately, due to the House's inaction on the Senate-passed bill last year, many farm bill programs expired, while others were temporarily extended at the end of the year, making it all the more imperative that we work together now to ensure we move ahead with a bill in the next few months. I was glad that in December we were able to delay and prevent the "dairy cliff" from roiling markets worldwide and inflating dairy prices, which would have wreaked havoc in the marketplace and on our farms. But the short-term extension of the Farm Bill is no rational way to legislate, and the last-minute extension left dozens of critical agriculture programs stranded without funding. We must not repeat that process.

The bill before us contains many of the same improvements included in the 2012 Senate-passed bill, while making important updates to reflect new fiscal realities and maintaining the integrity of the policies we worked so hard to pass last year. The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act makes an investment in American agriculture that will benefit our producers, our dairy farmers, our rural communities, our Main Street businesses, taxpayers, and consumers, all while reducing the deficit by \$23 billion.

Every Farm Bill is important to the Green Mountain State and to all the states of our nation as a matter of national security. Very few countries can boast that they can feed themselves. We have the ability to nourish 320-plus

million Americans. This represents an important part of our national security.

Agriculture is a pillar of Vermont's economy and of our Nation's economy. So it is with this farm bill that we have produced in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. One of many key components of this bill, in terms of Vermont and Vermont's economy, is a significant dairy reform proposal that offers the best hope in decades of helping producers and consumers step off the dangerous rollercoaster of wild price swings in the markets in which dairy farmers must sell their time-sensitive products. I believe this is key to our consideration of a farm bill, and I know it is what farmers in Vermont are watching closely; I have been hearing from them regularly in strong support of stabilization and margin insurance working in tandem. We simply must protect our dairy farmers from the volatility of turbulent price swings with a financially sound risk management program to help farmers manage risk and margin volatility, and do so without driving up the cost to the government.

As the author of the Organic Foods Production Act, I am extremely pleased this bill continues to make strong improvements for organic agriculture. I am also pleased that the bill once again includes a policy to give the National Organic Program much-needed authority to effectively protect and enforce organic integrity. In addition to enforcing the integrity of the organic brand, I am committed to seeing that this bill treats all farmers fairly. We made great strides last year in making improvements to crop insurance so that it will adequately compensate organic producers for their losses. Similar changes are needed in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program to eliminate the unfair lower payment limit applied solely to organic farmers seeking to enroll in the program's Organic Initiative.

Another important compromise in this bill is found in the trade title, where the proposal expands the success of the Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement pilot program from the 2008 farm bill, and also increases the funds available to support strategic prepositioning, which brings food aid commodities to at-risk regions before food emergencies strike. I look forward to working with Senators to find further improvements in how we can best provide emergency food aid and international development programs that have the flexibility to react quickly in times of emergency, avoid disrupting local markets, and increase efficiency so we can save money and feed more people.

This legislation also includes support for vital anti-hunger programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. Unfortunately, with so many Americans still

struggling to put food on the table, nutrition assistance and emergency feeding programs have become even more crucial. The bill also contains initiatives to encourage better health, increased access to local foods, nutrition for children and seniors, and to support self-sufficiency and food security in our Nation's low-income communities while tackling the difficult problem of "food deserts." I am also pleased that Chairwoman STABENOW included language I offered as an amendment in committee last year to make it easier for SNAP participants to buy local foods through a Community Supported Agriculture Share, CSA, membership.

But at a time when more Americans than ever before are at risk of going hungry and food pantry shelves across the country are bare, these programs could be made even stronger by dedicating more resources to help the neediest among us. I hope during our consideration of this bill we can work to increase support for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, SNAP employment and training programs, and community food projects to the level included in last year's farm bill. These programs are essential in our communities, and I hope we can invest as much in these programs this year as we did last year.

I am disappointed, however, that the bill before the Senate today once again includes \$4 billion in cuts to the SNAP program, which will predominately come from northeastern States. I understand this cut is part of a larger compromise on behalf of Chairwoman STABENOW, who has been a strong supporter of these nutrition assistance programs. Ensuring these programs can continue to serve Vermonters and all Americans in need is a key part to enacting a strong farm bill for this country.

This is why I am particularly concerned about the bill the House will consider which includes five times the cuts to nutrition assistance as the Senate bill, and \$4 billion more than the House included in their committee bill last year. These cuts will needlessly eliminate millions of low-income Americans from this program. The House bill would mean that several thousand children would lose eligibility for free school lunches. In Vermont, one in five children lives in food insecure homes and I know that number is even higher in some other States. It is shameful for any child in this country to go hungry and I hope the Senate will continue to oppose these draconian cuts to nutrition assistance.

The Senate agriculture committee's chairwoman and ranking member, and both of their staffs, should be applauded for the great work they have done to swiftly move this bipartisan bill through committee and now onto the Senate floor in record speed. I hope the Senate can once again move forward in a bipartisan way to pass the farm bill this week, and I hope the