

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said:

Our capacity is limited only by our ability to work together. What is needed is the will.

I have just returned from a week at home in Montana traveling from Fort Benton to Billings to Bozeman. I visited with constituents from all across our State. At each one of my meetings, the conversation would touch on the first snow of the season or football and the Bobcats or the Grizzlies. Those are, in this case, football teams. But inevitably every conversation turned to the challenges we face in Washington and the standoff we just had over the country's borrowing limit and funding the government.

People have lost faith in our ability to serve them. They are worried about what the dysfunction means for the future of our country.

For more than 2 weeks, Congress was stuck in a stalemate, unable to agree on a course for our Nation. The political standoff shook America's confidence and threatened the global economy. Thankfully, compromise was able to overcome conflict. Cooler heads finally prevailed. But our Nation didn't emerge from the fight unscathed.

The 16-day government shutdown took a \$24 billion bite out of the U.S. economy, according to Standard & Poor's. The rating agency now projects the U.S. economy will only grow at 2.4 percent in the fourth quarter as opposed to the already slow 3 percent predicted prior to the shutdown. That is a staggering self-inflicted wound, and defaulting would have been even worse.

Thankfully, that didn't happen. Leader REID and Minority Leader MCCONNELL were able to find the will and come together to provide a path that averted default. Their bipartisan legislation, passed on October 16, pulled us back from the brink. It created a conference committee to negotiate a budget compromise and it gave the President the power to suspend the debt limit until early February. It also gave Senators an opportunity to object and overturn the suspension using what is called a resolution of disapproval. That is what we are considering today.

I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this resolution. For the good of our economy, it cannot pass. Passing this resolution would plunge this Nation back into the same economic crisis we were facing just a few weeks ago. With economic confidence still suffering from the shutdown, another debt ceiling crisis could drive the Nation—and the world—back into recession. We cannot let that happen. It is time to be responsible leaders. Congress needs to stop governing from one self-created crisis to another.

Tomorrow, the budget conference committee will begin discussions on a plan to resolve the fiscal challenges before us. The conference will be led by Chairman MURRAY and Chairman RYAN. They are smart, hardworking and solutions oriented and I am confident they can craft a compromise.

I began my remarks with a quote from President Roosevelt and I will close with another. Roosevelt once said:

The great test for us in our time is whether all the groups of our people are willing to work together for continuing progress.

Today, we face our test. Can we work together for continuing progress?

I strongly urge Members of the Senate to reject the resolution before us. It is a step backward, a return to shutdowns and showdowns. Enough is enough. Instead, we must find the will to work together for progress, for the good of our economy and the good of our country.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

• Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, earlier this month, I expressed my opposition to S. 1569, which allowed our debt limit to increase through February 7, 2014. Today, the Senate considers S.J. Res. 26, which would reject the suspension in the debt limit and immediately halt any new debt issuances by the United States. I support this resolution.

My position remains unchanged from earlier this month. Our national debt is topping \$17 trillion and has nearly doubled since the beginning of the Obama administration. If we allow the Nation to continue on its current path, it will only lead to economic destruction. Allowing the debt to continue increasing without any commonsense solutions to rein in the federal government would be irresponsible and reckless.

The recent increase in the debt limit is President Obama's sixth since coming to office. In that time, no significant action has been taken to reduce the long term trajectory of the debt. If we continue to do nothing to rein in spending, the national debt will skyrocket to \$25 trillion in the next decade. Even the President agrees with these numbers. We cannot allow this to happen, which is why I support the resolution prohibiting a continued suspension of the debt limit. •

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

DISAPPROVING OF THE PRESIDENT'S EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND THE DEBT LIMIT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question now

occurs on agreeing to the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 26.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 45, nays 54, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 220 Leg.]

YEAS—45

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Alexander | Cruz | McConnell |
| Ayotte | Enzi | Moran |
| Barrasso | Fischer | Murkowski |
| Blunt | Flake | Paul |
| Boozman | Graham | Portman |
| Burr | Grassley | Risch |
| Chambliss | Hatch | Roberts |
| Chiesa | Heller | Rubio |
| Coats | Hoeven | Scott |
| Coburn | Isakson | Sessions |
| Cochran | Johanns | Shelby |
| Collins | Johnson (WI) | Thune |
| Corker | Kirk | Toomey |
| Cornyn | Lee | Vitter |
| Crapo | McCain | Wicker |

NAYS—54

| | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Baldwin | Harkin | Murray |
| Baucus | Heinrich | Nelson |
| Begich | Heitkamp | Pryor |
| Bennet | Hirono | Reed |
| Blumenthal | Johnson (SD) | Reid |
| Boxer | Kaine | Rockefeller |
| Brown | King | Sanders |
| Cantwell | Klobuchar | Schatz |
| Cardin | Landrieu | Schumer |
| Carper | Leahy | Shaheen |
| Casey | Levin | Stabenow |
| Coons | Manchin | Tester |
| Donnelly | Markey | Udall (CO) |
| Durbin | McCaskill | Udall (NM) |
| Feinstein | Menendez | Warner |
| Franken | Merkley | Warren |
| Gillibrand | Mikulski | Whitehouse |
| Hagan | Murphy | Wyden |

NOT VOTING—1

Inhofe

The motion was rejected.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF RICHARD F. GRIFFIN, JR., TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard F. Griffin, Jr., of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination.

Who yields time? The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we are getting ready to vote to end debate.

This is a cloture vote on the nomination of Richard Griffin to serve as general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. As I stated yesterday, this is an important role for making sure the NLRB can do its job.

This summer, as we know, we voted to fill the Board with the requisite number of Republicans and Democrats on the Board. I thought that was a good vote. This is the one left over; that is, the general counsel position. Mr. Griffin is very well qualified. He has been thoroughly vetted.

I have received absolutely not one objection to his qualifications or his background. He has had 30 years' experience as a labor lawyer and he deserves strong bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to vote for cloture so we can get to the vote later today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I am not going to vote to confirm Mr. Griffin because I think his nomination to be general counsel to the Board does not do anything to keep it from moving toward advocacy instead of being an umpire. But I do think it is time to close the debate and have an up-or-down vote. I am going to vote yes on cloture.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Richard F. Griffin, Jr., of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board.

Harry Reid, Brian Schatz, Barbara Boxer, Carl Levin, Bill Nelson, Jeff Merkley, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Debbie Stabenow, Mark R. Warner, Tammy Baldwin, Jeanne Shaheen, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Mark Udall, Tom Udall, Michael F. Bennet, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, Ron Wyden.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Richard F. Griffin, Jr., of the District of Columbia to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 62, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 221 Ex.]

YEAS—62

| | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Alexander | Franken | Murkowski |
| Ayotte | Gillibrand | Murphy |
| Baldwin | Hagan | Murray |
| Baucus | Harkin | Nelson |
| Begich | Heinrich | Pryor |
| Bennet | Heitkamp | Reed |
| Blumenthal | Hirono | Reid |
| Blunt | Johnson (SD) | Rockefeller |
| Boxer | Kaine | Sanders |
| Brown | King | Schatz |
| Cantwell | Klobuchar | Schumer |
| Cardin | Landrieu | Shaheen |
| Carper | Leahy | Stabenow |
| Casey | Levin | Tester |
| Collins | Manchin | Udall (CO) |
| Coons | Markey | Udall (NM) |
| Corker | McCain | Warner |
| Donnelly | McCaskill | Warren |
| Durbin | Menendez | Whitehouse |
| Feinstein | Merkley | Wyden |
| Flake | Mikulski | |

NAYS—37

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|----------|
| Barrasso | Graham | Portman |
| Boozman | Grassley | Risch |
| Burr | Hatch | Roberts |
| Chambliss | Heller | Rubio |
| Chiesa | Hoeven | Scott |
| Coats | Isakson | Sessions |
| Coburn | Johanns | Shelby |
| Cochran | Johnson (WI) | Thune |
| Cornyn | Kirk | Toomey |
| Crapo | Lee | Vitter |
| Cruz | McConnell | Wicker |
| Enzi | Moran | |
| Fischer | Paul | |

NOT VOTING—1

Inhofe

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Pursuant to Senate Resolution 15 of the 113th Congress, there will now be 8 hours of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in the aftermath of the battle over the continuing resolution and the debt ceiling, I am sure I am not alone in hearing from my constituents they are hoping that Democrats and Republicans can now work together on some of the most important and chronic problems that challenge our country. But instead of doing that, my friends across the aisle have taken this opportunity to engage in what can only be described as a power grab that will result in even more polarization and partisan acrimony here in Washington.

What I am talking about specifically is the effort of the President and Democratic leadership to pack the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. For those who may not follow the Federal court system, America has 13 different Federal appellate courts, but the DC court stands out as the most powerful in the country. Some have called it the second most important court in the Nation because it has jurisdiction over a variety of regulatory and constitutional matters. Whether it relates to Dodd-Frank in financial services, to ObamaCare and its implementation, or to national security matters, all of those types of cases get heard in the DC Circuit Court. No other appellate court in the Nation wields such vast influence over hot-button issues, ranging, as I said, from health care to the

Environmental Protection Agency and its activities, which I know are as important to the Presiding Officer as they are to me, as well as gun rights and the war on terrorism.

President Obama argues the DC Circuit Court needs three more judges in order to get its work done, but the facts simply don't bear that out. That is not true. For example, between 2005 and 2013, the DC Circuit's total number of written decisions per active judge actually went down by 27 percent. The number of appeals filed with the court fell by 18 percent. So instead of having more work to do, it has less work to do than it did in 2005.

As one commentator has observed: The DC Circuit already has the lowest caseload in the Nation and, if anything, trends show their workload is decreasing—decreasing, going down—not up.

Indeed, one DC Circuit Court judge recently told the senior Senator from Iowa that if any more judges were added now, there wouldn't be enough work to go around. So one might wonder why then the President and Senator REID would want to pack the DC Circuit Court with three additional judges if there is not enough work to go around today.

Let me also note the DC Circuit Court has a unique record in that it actually took 4 months off between May and September of this year. That is hardly the record of a court that has too much work to do and simply can't get it done.

Meanwhile, there are courts across our country, both appellate courts and district courts, that are overburdened. Some of these courts are labeled as judicial emergencies because they simply have such a heavy caseload they can't get the work done. Why wouldn't we want to allocate more judicial resources, more help, to those courts that need the help rather than to pack the DC Circuit Court with judges it simply doesn't need?

Don't just take my word for it. Prominent Democratic leaders have actually made no secret of what is happening here. One might wonder what the rationale is, if there is not enough work to do. Why would Senator REID and other Democratic leaders want to add new judges to a court that doesn't have enough work to do? Well, back in March, the senior Senator from New York, Senator SCHUMER, said the following of the DC circuit judges:

Here's what they have done in the last year: They have overturned the EPA's ability to regulate existing coal plants . . . They have rendered the SEC impotent by saying that the SEC can't pass rulings unless they do what is called a cost-benefit analysis . . . They have ruled that recess appointments couldn't be taken into account.

Senator SCHUMER also said:

We will fill up the DC circuit one way or another.

Well, I disagree with Senator SCHUMER's characterization on some of these cases, but it is true the DC Circuit Court has a unique role in American jurisprudence in deciding some

very important cases for the entire country. There are administrative agencies that are part of the executive branch, and when they make decisions—whether it relates to financial services, the Environmental Protection Agency, Health and Human Services, or any administrative agency—those decisions typically get decided and reviewed by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

More recently, the majority leader put it this way when he said:

We're focusing very intently on the DC Circuit. We need at least one more. There's three vacancies. We need at least one more and that will switch the majority.

So this isn't about the efficient administration of impartial justice. This is about stacking the court by changing the majority. That was a quote from the majority leader of the Senate. So there is no mystery about what is going on here. The majority leader and his allies are attempting to pack the court with judges who will rubberstamp their big-government agenda.

The majority leader is also threatening to use the nuclear option again unless Senate Republicans simply snap to attention and salute smartly. Well, that is not going to happen. In simple terms, Democrats are prepared to violate the Senate's own rules to help flip the DC circuit in favor of the Obama administration's aggressive administrative overreach. If these tactics succeed, the Senate will be weakened as an institution and the Nation's second highest court will be transformed into a far-left ideological body.

But I will remind my colleagues that what goes around comes around in the Senate. When Republicans control the Senate and we have a Republican in the White House, I warn my colleagues the same rules they put into effect with the nuclear option will be used to their disadvantage then. We shouldn't do it. We shouldn't go there.

But it is clear what the motivation is. Again, this is not about the efficient administration of impartial justice. This is about getting your way and getting a rubberstamp on the actions of regulatory overreach that are far too common here in Washington, DC.

It is true the DC Circuit Court has ruled against the Obama administration and its regulatory agencies, but it is also true they have affirmed many of the most important and far-reaching decisions of the Obama administration's regulatory agencies. One example where it ruled against the administration is in 2011, when it struck down the "proxy access" rule of the Securities and Exchange Commission by declaring the agency failed to conduct a cost-benefit analysis required by law before adopting the regulation.

I don't know about anyone else, but I wish the government would do more cost-benefit analyses, not less, and so I am glad the DC Circuit Court struck down that rule because of the failure of the Securities and Exchange Commission to conduct a cost-benefit analysis.

In another example last year, the court vacated the cross-State air pollution rule of the Environmental Protection Agency, noting it would "impose massive emissions reduction requirements" on certain States "without regard to the limits set by the statutory text."

In other words, they acted beyond their congressional authorization. This was also an example, in Texas—Texas got swept into this cross-State air pollution rule without even an opportunity to be heard and to offer competing analyses of the models the Environmental Protection Agency used. No matter how committed we all are to clean air, we should not sanction an administrative agency run amok, doing what is not authorized by the statutory text.

The DC Circuit has also rejected as unconstitutional a pair of appointments the President made to the National Labor Relations Board. Talk about overreach. This is where the President tried to trump the confirmation powers of the U.S. Senate in the Constitution—the power of advice and consent, it is called—by making unconstitutional so-called recess appointments. The DC Circuit called him on it and held that it was unconstitutional.

More recently, the court held that the President's Nuclear Regulatory Commission was simply flouting the law. Do we not want a court to call the President when administrative agencies are simply flouting the law if we are a nation of laws? In this case, they flouted the law by delaying a decision on whether to use Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste repository.

These were all commonsense decisions, and you can probably tell from my comments that I think they were well grounded in the law and the facts and I agree with the decision. In that case, they all went against the Obama administration's preferred position, but it is true that the DC Circuit has also ruled in favor of the administration's position in a number of cases. Again, here is an EPA decision. Since 2012, Jeremy Jacobs reports, the Agency has won 60 percent of the cases that have been reviewed by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. In 60 percent of the lawsuits where the Environmental Protection Agency has been taken to court for exceeding its authority, 60 percent of the time the EPA position has prevailed. That is a better performance than the EPA had at the circuit during George W. Bush's administration. In particular, the EPA has scored landmark victories related to greenhouse gas regulations, ethanol-blended gasoline, and mountaintop-removal coal mining. But beyond energy and environmental issues, the DC Circuit Court has upheld President Obama's Executive order regarding embryonic stem cell research on two separate occasions, in 2011 and 2012.

Again, these are not my preferred outcomes, but I think they demonstrate that the DC Circuit Court has

learned to strike a balance and certainly is not pro-administration or anti-administration. It epitomizes what a court should be, which is an impartial administrator of justice. Again, this same court upheld the Affordable Care Act in 2011, ruling that the individual health insurance mandate was constitutional under the commerce clause. We know what happened when it got to the U.S. Supreme Court. They had a different view.

It demonstrates the kind of judicial restraint that the current DC court, balanced as it is with four nominees by a Republican President and four nominees by a Democratic President—how it has administered evenhanded justice, which would be destroyed if the President is successful and if Senator REID is successful in packing this court with three more of their liberal allies. As I said, this court is currently split right down the middle. Four of the active judges were appointed by a Republican President and four were appointed by a Democratic President. Yet it is clear that the DC Circuit Court is in the crosshairs of the majority leader and his Democratic allies, including the President, because they want to tilt the court in their direction—a more liberal, bigger government direction, one that is more deferential to administrative agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies that refuse to take into account a cost-benefit analysis, which we ought to have more of, not less.

The truth is that there is an answer to this standoff in terms of the court-packing President Obama and Senator REID are attempting. There actually is a way to reallocate these unneeded seats from the DC Circuit Court of Appeals to other courts that actually need the judges, unlike this court that has the lightest caseload of any circuit court in the Nation.

Senator GRASSLEY, the senior Senator from Iowa, has offered a reasonable compromise which would allow several of President Obama's appellate nominees to be approved for district courts or courts of appeals where they are actually needed. In other words, President Obama would still get to pick them; he would just have to pick them for courts where they would actually have enough work to do and where they are needed.

Again, based on current caseloads, the DC Circuit Court does not need new judges, but other appellate courts really do. I would think that during a time when judgeships are constrained after the Budget Control Act, when discretionary spending is down, and when the courts need more resources allocated, we would want to allocate the resources to courts and to jurisdictions where they are actually needed, not to places where they are not needed.

For all these reasons and more, I hope Members of both parties will agree that the reasonable way to do it would be to pass the Grassley bill, the Grassley compromise to reallocate

these judges to the places where they are really needed and to prevent the stacking of this court and this reckless power grab.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

SUPERSTORM SANDY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of the 1-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy's landfall in the Northeast and the destruction it brought on a ruinous path through Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. I will be joined today on the floor—and I ask unanimous consent that we be permitted to engage in a colloquy—by my colleague from New York, Senator SCHUMER, and from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, if there is no objection.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I can scarcely capture in words the awesome, monstrous power of this storm as it hit the Northeast as I traveled there. I was near the coastline of Connecticut, traveling some of the roads in the midst of this storm as it ripped through my State, tearing apart communities along the coast, destroying homes and businesses, displacing families, and forever altering the shoreline itself. Anybody who questions the power of nature at its most destructive should have seen this storm as it unfolded and the damage it left in its wake—in fact, in Connecticut, \$770 million in damages.

What I remember from touring Connecticut is not only the size and magnitude of the destruction but also the resilience and strength of Connecticut's people as they struggled through the pain and anguish of coping with this devastation, wondering how they would ever rebuild. In fact, they have rebuilt with the courage and relentless strength and fortitude that have so marked the character of Connecticut and New England and New York as they rallied around one another and exhibited that sense of optimism and hope. It was as important as any material resources that were brought to bear. They rallied around each other with gratitude and with hope because they had each other, and they have succeeded in clearing the debris, reconstructing, rebuilding in a way that is inspiring.

I only wish Congress's response was as effective and courageous as that of the citizens of Connecticut that I viewed in the storm's aftermath. The Senate was slow to act, but it was before the House in passing the \$60 billion recovery package for the Northeast. The effort was stalled in the House, quite bluntly, with bipartisan politics of the worst kind and trivial obstruction.

There are lessons to be learned. No. 1 is that partisanship and politics should have no role in our response to disasters, whether in Oklahoma or Colorado

or Louisiana or the Northeast. We are all in this effort together when disaster strikes. We should rally around each other as the people of Connecticut rallied.

Our response has to be quicker, smarter, stronger than it was in this institution. We owe it to ourselves as well as to the people who suffered the financial and emotional loss. For many of them, there were physical injuries as a result of this natural disaster.

Those two lessons are reinforced by a third, which is that these superstorms have become a new normal. We can no longer regard the once-in-a-century storm as once every hundred years. They are coming once every year because climate disruption is increasing their frequency and force in a way that is awesome and alarming and astonishing. So another lesson is that there has to be preparation to prevent damage and to mitigate the effects of these storms when they strike, and the investments—and they are investments—have to be smart and strong, with means such as storm barriers, breakers, better shoreline resilience.

Eventually, the Federal Government provided aid, and Connecticut has put to good use the \$200 million that was distributed through the National Flood Insurance Program to homeowners and business owners. Cities and towns around my State have used \$42 million in FEMA assistance, and more than \$10 million has gone toward health services and facilities. As our Governor announced yesterday, an additional \$65 million has been granted to the State to supplement the initial \$72 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of community development block grants for disaster relief. These new Federal dollars are critical to the effort of rebuilding, and I will continue to fight not only for additional funds but also against the bureaucratic logjams and redtape that have prevented so many from receiving more timely aid.

This aid has come too slowly, it has been too small, and it has been behind the efforts—in time and strength—of the people of Connecticut. I will continue to fight for increased aid, including from the \$100 million that was announced yesterday and today—today's announcement of the U.S. Department of Interior of \$100 million in the coastline resiliency project. I will support all qualified applicants from Connecticut securing some of this competitive funding. We will fight for a fair allocation of this money to benefit the important work Connecticut is doing to strengthen our coastline so that we can prevent and reduce the effects of these storms in the future.

I had the privilege to travel the State as a leader of a listening tour for the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force this past May, just over the half-year mark from the time Sandy hit.

The progress made with this help from the Federal Government, combined with the good will, drive, and

sense of responsibility toward one another—exemplified by the people of Connecticut—has been remarkable. We must resolve to do better at the Federal level, and I hope that not only the storm itself but the shortcomings of the relief effort will be a teaching moment for the Nation.

The evidence is irrefutable that climate disruption is impacting our oceans and atmosphere and leading to an increasing number of severe weather storm events across the country that we cannot control. We will see more of such monstrous storms here and in other parts of the country.

I thank my colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator SCHUMER, who have been strong and steadfast leaders in this effort to recognize the effects of climate disruption and prepare for them.

Connecticut is in the process of upgrading our infrastructure to strengthen our resiliency among the most vulnerable communities. We are investing in microgrids, often powered by hydrogen fuel cells manufactured in our State, to provide backup power for hospitals and senior communities in towns such as Preston and Franklin, which I visited in the aftermath of the storm.

In Milford, residents are using HUD funding to elevate their homes so they can guard against these storm surges. Other coastal towns are employing green infrastructure with marsh grass to slow surging waters during storms.

In Stamford, CT, my hometown, the city is using Federal aid to upgrade a 17-foot hurricane barrier by replacing manual pumps to ensure against damage to the city's communities in future storms. I visited the shoreline of Stamford, as I did up and down the coast of Connecticut, and I have since, to see how Connecticut is learning these lessons so we can reduce dollar costs as well as human costs. The improvements taking place across Connecticut speak volumes to our strength of will and mind and the determined character of our people in Connecticut.

I express appreciation to colleagues, such as Senators SCHUMER and WHITEHOUSE and others in this body, who helped us in a time of need. They came forth to provide encouragement and support. They assured the people of Connecticut that they are not alone.

No one in the United States—whether it is in the Presiding Officer's State of West Virginia or in the westernmost part of Hawaii—should be alone after being struck by a natural disaster. We need to rally together.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Before I join the colloquy with Senators BLUMENTHAL and SCHUMER, I have two bits of housekeeping.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. today all postcloture time on the Griffin nomination be yielded back, and