

Brookport, East Peoria, Pekin, the list of cities touched by the tornadoes in the State goes on and on.

I visited Washington, IL, near Peoria, 5 days after the tornado—and Gifford, IL, just a few days after that. What I saw was heartbreaking. In the city of Washington, alone, 1,108 homes were damaged—most were damaged very badly. Five hundred ninety-five of those homes were destroyed. I saw bare foundations where families had lived just days before. Trees had been reduced to splinters. Street signs had been torn out of the ground making it nearly impossible to see where one block ended and another began.

The loss of homes and property was really difficult to bear, but the real tragedy lies in the lives that were claimed. Three people died in Washington, two people died in Washington County near St. Louis, and three were killed in downstate Massac County, which is located along the Ohio River.

It is a miracle more lives were not lost, particularly in the path of the EF4 tornado that touched down in East Peoria, traveled through the city of Washington and continued up to Long Point, IL. In Washington, many lives may have been saved by the fact that so many members of the community were in church when the tornado came through. When the sirens went off, 500 people inside Crossroads United Methodist Church huddled in a storm shelter in the building. Half a mile away, at the Apostolic Christian Church, many of the 450 or so people who were there took refuge in Sunday school rooms. The tornado, spinning at nearly 200 miles per hour changed course by several degrees just seconds before impact and went right between those two churches. Neither church was damaged.

I can't say enough about the tireless efforts the emergency personnel who were there from the minute the sirens went off. They were there to help under the most extraordinary circumstances. I supported Governor Quinn's request for a Federal disaster declaration for 15 counties in the State. The President granted "individual assistance" to people in Champaign, Douglas, Fayette, Grundy, Jasper, LaSalle, Massac, Pope, Tazewell, Vermilion, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, Will, and Woodford Counties. This declaration allowed people in those communities whose homes and businesses were damaged to start repairs and to find temporary housing if they needed it. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided more than \$28 million in loans to the tornado victims. The Small Business Administration also made loans available to businesses in the affected counties. To date, it has provided 305 loans for a total of \$25.8 million.

The people who live and work in the damaged communities have made incredible progress rebuilding. Washington Mayor Gary Manier predicted last year that the city would rebuild within a year. The task proved far greater than anyone would have

thought but the city has made great strides. Building permits have been issued for more than 70 percent of the damaged properties. More than 25 percent of the destroyed homes have been replaced and reoccupied. Work remains to be done but the city has seen enormous progress.

Thousands of volunteers have helped with the cleanup. Ben Davidson, executive pastor at Bethany Community Church, has coordinated volunteer efforts since the early stages. He says volunteers have accounted for 13,000 workdays and 70,000 hours. Although most volunteers have been from central Illinois, people from all over the State continue to show up on weekends to help plant trees and cut weeds on neglected properties. Hearing the stories of Illinoisans working together to help neighbors and even strangers get back on their feet makes me proud to be from Illinois. Thank you to everyone engaged in the rescue and cleanup at every level.

I also want to recognize the hard work and dedication of: Jonathon Monken, head of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency; Gifford Mayor Derald Ackerman; Brookport Mayor John Klaffer; and Metropolis Mayor Billy McDaniel. They were there when their constituents and their communities needed them the most.

I am thinking of all those whose lives were affected by this tragic event. We are rebuilding—as Americans always do—and will be stronger for it.

#### NOMINATION OF LAUREN MCFERRAN

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, this morning we convened a hearing to consider the President's nomination of Lauren McFerran to fill an impending vacancy on the National Labor Relations Board. Ms. McFerran is well known to most of us as a senior staffer on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and I look forward to her speedy confirmation. She has been nominated to fill a vacancy that will result from the departure next month of a current Board member, Nancy Schiffer. I would like to thank Ms. Schiffer for her dedicated service. She has been a highly respected Board member, and I wish her every success in her future endeavors.

The National Labor Relations Board is an agency that is absolutely critical to our country, to our economy, and to our middle class. Over 75 years ago, Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act, guaranteeing American workers the right to form and join a union and bargain for a better life. The act sets forth a national policy to encourage collective bargaining. Specifically, the act states:

It is declared to be the policy of the United States to eliminate the causes of certain substantial obstructions to the free flow of commerce and to mitigate and eliminate these obstructions when they have occurred by encouraging the practice and procedure of

collective bargaining and by protecting the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection.

For union and nonunion workers alike, the act provides essential protections. It gives workers a voice in the workplace, allowing them to join together and speak up for fair wages and benefits, and for safe working conditions. These rights ensure that the people who do the real work in this country have a shot at receiving a fair share of the benefits when our economy grows—and with rising income inequality in our country, these rights are more important than ever.

The NLRB is the guardian of these fundamental rights. Workers themselves cannot enforce the NLRA, but they can turn to the Board if they have been denied the basic protections provided under the law. In short, the Board plays a vital role in vindicating workers' rights. In the past 10 years, the NLRB has secured opportunities for reinstatement for 22,544 employees who were unjustly fired. It has recovered more than \$1 billion on behalf of workers whose rights were violated.

The Board also provides relief and remedies to our Nation's employers. For example, employers can turn to the Board for relief if a union commences a wildcat strike or refuses to bargain in good faith during negotiations. The NLRB has a long history of helping businesses resolve disputes efficiently. By preventing or resolving labor disputes that could disrupt our economy, the work that the Board does is vital to every worker and every business across the Nation.

That is why it is so important that we maintain a fully functional, five-member NLRB. I am proud of the fact that, just a little over a year ago, we were able to confirm members to completely fill the board for the first time in over a decade. Now, we need to fill a soon-to-be open seat so that the Board can continue to function effectively.

Ms. McFerran is not the first nominee for this seat. In September, the HELP Committee approved the nomination of a dedicated public servant, Sharon Block. Republicans and Democrats agreed on Ms. Block's reputation and qualifications, but her nomination was withdrawn in the face of circumstance beyond her control. As a result, Ms. Block will not have the opportunity to serve on the Board. Ms. Block is a tremendous public servant whose qualifications are unaffected and undiminished by the present circumstances and I look forward to Ms. Block's future service to our country.

I am heartened, however, by the President's decision to nominate Lauren McFerran. Ms. McFerran currently serves as Chief Labor Counsel and Deputy Staff Director on my HELP committee. I am proud to have her as a member of my staff; she has served the committee with excellence and

great professionalism; and I know firsthand that the President could not have found a more able successor to Ms. Schiffer. Ms. McFerran is an incredibly talented lawyer with deep knowledge of labor law. She is a person of sterling integrity and strong character. She will be a great asset to the Board.

It is my hope that by promptly confirming Ms. McFerran's nomination to fill the looming vacancy we can continue the progress that has been made recently, and begin a new era where orderly transitions on the NLRB are the norm. We should set a new precedent of confirming nominees—Democratic and Republican alike—in a timely manner.

I have no doubt that Ms. McFerran will do an excellent job in this important position. I look forward to moving her nomination expeditiously.

#### TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, today I honor a truly remarkable diplomat and legendary statesman. After 33 years of service to our Nation, Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns is retiring from the U.S. Department of State. Having served under 10 Secretaries and twice postponing his retirement, Ambassador Burns has had an enormous impact on the trajectory of U.S. foreign policy and I would like to recognize his many years of distinguished service and thank him for his tireless efforts.

Ambassador Burns joined the Foreign Service in 1982 and, within a year of joining, he had already made a name for himself as someone willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. Over the course of his 33 years in the Foreign Service, he has served in countless posts, including as Ambassador to Jordan, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Ambassador to Russia, and Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Since 2011, he has served as Deputy Secretary of State, holding the rare distinction of being only the second career diplomat to rise to the position.

It is a testament to both his character and unique skills that nearly every person who has had the pleasure of meeting Ambassador Burns has a story to tell about it. He has deftly steered our foreign policy through countless challenges over the past three decades and handled with skill sensitive diplomatic missions that few were willing and capable of taking on. That he has one of the most distinguished tenures as a career Foreign Service officer in memory is made all the more remarkable by his modesty and humility.

Ambassador Burns embodies the mission of the Department of State at its finest. He has been a mentor for generations of Department of State personnel and is an inspiration to all public servants, myself included. America is stronger and the world a better place thanks to his service. And while the

Department of State will feel his absence, I am relieved to know that he will continue to play an important and constructive role in global affairs through his new position as president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I thank him for his willingness to serve our country and I wish him and his family the best as they embark on a new journey.

#### TRIBUTE TO JENELLE KRISHNAMOORTHY

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute and to extend my thanks to an extraordinary individual, Jenelle Krishnamoorthy, who has served on my staff, with one small interruption of service, for a decade.

Jenelle came to my staff in the summer of 2003 as a fellow, later becoming a permanent staff member and eventually rising to lead my health policy team on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. From the time she arrived, it was clear that Jenelle was an exceptional talent—one possessing not just deep knowledge of health care and public health, but also with uncommon instincts about this institution and about how to accomplish great things in an increasingly divided Congress.

Throughout my career, I have been guided by a conviction that our country does not have a health care system, but rather a sick care system. If you get sick, you get care. We spend far too much time and riches treating disease once it has occurred, and far too little preventing it in the first place. Among my first charges to Jenelle when she arrived on staff was to think about how we make America a wellness society, one in which we make the healthy choice the easy choice. How do we, I asked her, change our workplaces, our schools, our communities, our child care settings, and our health care system so that we prevent the onset of chronic disease, rather than patch and fix and treat once a person gets sick?

Jenelle responded with a broad vision of a wellness society—a vision that has guided her work, and my own, for the past 10 years. Looking back over those 10 years, the breadth of what she has accomplished is truly remarkable.

The Affordable Care Act is one of the great health laws of the last 75 years. As my designee on that bill, Jenelle secured passage of a number of groundbreaking policy changes that have changed the landscape of our health care system. In particular, Jenelle was the primary drafter of the prevention title of that bill. As a result of that, every single American can now receive recommended preventive health care services absolutely free of charge. Routine services such as mammograms, vaccinations, diabetes and cancer screenings, among other things, are now cost free, forever, because of Jenelle's work.

As part of that bill, Jenelle was also the intellectual force behind the Pre-

vention Fund, which creates a public health partnership between the Federal Government and communities across the country by providing billions of dollars for communities to invest in proven preventive efforts such as tobacco cessation, childhood obesity prevention, HIV prevention, and public health workforce development. As a result, across the country, communities, from small towns in Iowa to our largest urban centers, are working together to weave health promotion into the very fabric of our communities and the lives of our citizens.

Through her work on the Affordable Care Act, Jenelle also played a key role in expanding nutrition labeling to chain restaurants around the country, giving hundreds of millions of consumers access to critical nutrition information that they need to take control of their own health, and also successfully fought for new policies to promote breastfeeding.

Jenelle's contributions to the health of our country go far beyond the Affordable Care Act. As the health policy director for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Jenelle shepherded passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act, the most significant reform of our food safety system in the country in decades. This law strengthened the Food and Drug Administration with critical new authorities to protect Americans by establishing a better and more modern system for keeping our food safe from farm to fork.

And just as she did with the food safety system, Jenelle also spearheaded efforts to improve the safety and quality of drugs and medical devices. In successfully leading committee passage of the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act, Jenelle helped ensure the safety of our drugs and medical devices, alleviate the effects of drugs shortages and manufacturing problems, and implemented long sought reform to help bring critical drugs and medical devices to patients faster.

Remarkably, these are just the highlights of Jenelle's accomplishments in the area of health policy and health promotion. Just in this Congress, Jenelle has led 16 bills into law, including bills to respond more quickly and effectively to public health disasters, to facilitate organ donation, to provide equitable funding to children's hospitals and ensure a steady supply of pediatric doctors, and to speed the approval of new sunscreens to protect Americans from skin cancer. Her efforts in the health arena in this Congress have made the HELP Committee one of the most productive in this Congress. For making me look good as the Chairman of the HELP Committee, I owe Jenelle a special debt of gratitude.

Americans take for granted the safety of our food supply and our drugs and medical equipment. When people go to their doctors and receive a free, often lifesaving mammogram, they do not