

that other police departments don't make the same mistakes.

She wants to make sure those mistakes aren't repeated across the country. She thinks about what would have happened if that information about Billy had been uploaded onto NCIC immediately, the day she reported it. Maybe Billy was taken to some other State. Maybe the lack of that information being transmitted that day meant that a break in the case didn't happen in those early days. She always thinks about what would have happened if she had access to more information—if the database that she looks at virtually every day, the NamUs database, had more information about missing persons and unidentified remains. She thinks about her ability to solve this case and how it could have helped the police solve this case if those databases were better or more up to date.

We hope we are eventually going to solve the case of Billy Smolinski's disappearance in Connecticut, but we also hope that we can pass legislation here in both Houses—bipartisan, non-controversial, measured, common-sense—that will assure that there are less Jan Smolinskis in the world going forward.

We passed this in the House, when I was there, with a broad, big bipartisan vote. This is the first time we introduced it on a bipartisan basis here in the Senate, and I am hopeful—speaking on behalf of not just the Smolinski family, but the 90,000 other families who are grieving for a missing person—we can get this done and get it done shortly so we can get families and law enforcement the tools they need to crack more of these cases.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF DALE A. DROZD TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Dale A. Drozd, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30

minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as the distinguished chair pointed out, we are going to vote on the nomination of Judge Dale Drozd to be a Federal District Judge for the Eastern District of California. That is the good news.

Unfortunately, the bad news is that so far this year, we have only confirmed six judges since the Republicans took back the majority in January. That is not even a judge per month. Some would claim this is reasonable, but I don't believe it is.

President Bush, in the last 2 years of his term, had a Republican majority for up to that point, but during the last years of his term he had a Democratic majority. I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee at that time. I did not want to do what the Republicans had done to President Clinton in blocking 75 of his judges. I said we have to go with the regular order, because if we didn't go with the regular order, we were going to be politicizing the judiciary.

So we had a Democratic majority, a Republican President, and by this time we had confirmed 33 judges hoping it would set a precedent and stop what was happening when the Republicans blocked 75 of President Clinton's judges. I wanted to set a different pattern. I wanted to take at least judicial confirmations out of politics.

Well, it went back to the same old, same old, doing just exactly what they did to President Clinton. They have allowed only six judges to be confirmed so far this year under the Obama administration, as opposed to 33 whom we had confirmed during the Bush administration. In fact, at this rate, by the end of the year, the Senate will have confirmed the fewest number of judges at any time any one of us have been in this body—the fewest number of judges in more than half a century—even though we have a much larger population, we have a lot more vacancies, and we have a number of judicial emergencies.

This has had a devastating effect on Americans across the country. I hear all the time from individuals and from small businesses about how they go into our Federal courts seeking justice; they want the Federal courts to hear these claims and these courts are saying: We can't. We have so many vacancies in the judiciary, it will be years before we can hear your case.

Last week, I spoke about the Associated Press report on Latino migrant farmworkers who have waited more than three years just to learn whether they can proceed with their claim for stolen wages. The lengthy wait time is due to the fact that there are too many cases and not enough judges in that California Federal court. An empty judgeship in that court has remained unfilled for almost three years. The long overdue vote today to confirm Judge Drozd will finally fill that vacancy.

The Wall Street Journal highlighted a case in the same California Federal

court brought by a former Navy technician who alleged that he had been discriminated against by his employer. That lawsuit has been pending for eight years. The technician has not been able to find steady work since filing his suit and does not know how he will manage financially as he waits for a day in court that seems never to come.

One of the Federal judges in that court, Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill, gave the Wall Street Journal this devastating assessment: "Over the years I've received several letters from people indicating, 'Even if I win this case now, my business has failed because of the delay. How is this justice?' And the simple answer, which I cannot give them, is this: It is not justice. We know it."

Today, Nancy Kaufman, the CEO of the National Council of Jewish Women, authored an op-ed which said: "what matters to the average person or business with a case in the federal courts is whether the lower courts are, in fact, able to dispense justice in a timely manner with so many empty seats on the bench. And that is where the majority in the Senate has strangled the process by running up the number of judicial vacancies."

I ask unanimous consent that Ms. Kaufman's op-ed be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Huffington Post, Oct. 5, 2015]

THE DISGRACEFUL STATE OF JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

(By Nancy K. Kaufman, CEO, National Council of Jewish Women)

The first Monday in October marks the beginning of a new term for the U.S. Supreme Court and a good time to reflect on the state of the nation's judicial branch of government. This year the capacity of the federal court system to keep up with its caseload is seriously in question. Judicial vacancies are rising and the Senate is likely to confirm the smallest number of nominees since 1953. The confirmation of federal judges by the Senate has all but come to a halt. Furthermore, the pattern of behavior by senators to slow the process appears quite deliberate. Critics have charged that the delays in the process are intended to deny President Obama the ability to appoint judges in the last two years of his term, unlike the pace of confirmations experienced by other presidents at this point in their tenure.

How has this happened? Judicial nominations proceed through the Senate in a sort of formal dance, in which individual senators have an unusual role. By tradition the president consults senators in whose states the judicial vacancies occur prior to nominating anyone. Then the nominees go before the Senate Judiciary Committee for hearings and a vote. But individual senators can delay a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing indefinitely without stating why. Some have done so even when they agreed to the nomination in the first place. A nomination can be held hostage due to another matter altogether or another piece of legislation. After

the hearing and the committee vote, the Senate majority leader is then supposed to schedule a floor vote, and that too can be delayed almost indefinitely.

In fact, during the current two-year session of Congress which began in January, only five judges were confirmed by the Senate in the first eight months—the slowest pace since 1953. A sixth judge was confirmed in September, the first nominee in 2015 from a state with a Democratic senator—Missouri's Claire McCaskill. These weren't controversial nominees. All six were voted out of committee with bipartisan support and ultimately confirmed unanimously on the Senate floor, and yet were forced to wait an average of 80 days for a floor vote.

Such a slow confirmation rate is without precedent. Most recently, when Republican president George W. Bush had two years left, the Democratic Senate confirmed 68 judges. During the last two years of Democratic president Bill Clinton's term in office, the Republican Senate confirmed 73 judges. In both cases, the nominees confirmed in the last two years accounted for about one-fifth of the total for each president. At the current snail's pace, less than one in 20 of Obama's confirmations will come during his final two years.

What's at stake? A situation where "justice delayed is justice denied." While the Supreme Court is rightly regarded as the pinnacle of the US legal system, it is nonetheless a very small part of it. Its nine justices often set landmark precedents with their decisions, or at least clarify existing law, but typically the court now handles only 80 cases or less per term. In contrast, a total of 376,536 civil and criminal cases were filed in US district courts in 2014. Of those, the majority—nearly 300,000—were civil cases. That year, about 55,000 cases were appealed from the district courts to the 11 US Courts of Appeals. During the last Supreme Court term, 7,376 cases were appealed to the Supreme Court. (It is important to remember that cases generally don't reach the appeals stage in the same year they were originally filed.) In other words, on average about one-tenth of one percent of appeals cases make it all the way to the top of the judicial branch—making the lower federal courts critical decision-makers.

So what matters to the average person or business with a case in the federal courts is whether the lower courts are, in fact, able to dispense justice in a timely manner with so many empty seats on the bench. And that is where the majority in the Senate has strangled the process by running up the number of judicial vacancies. Since January 1, that number has increased by 56 percent, from 43 to 67.

When the courts lack enough judges, a judicial emergency is declared by the Judicial Conference of the United States, the national policy-making body for the federal courts created by federal law. A judicial emergency is a situation defined by strict criteria—it is not just an off-the-cuff opinion. Since January 1, the number of such declared emergencies has increased by 158 percent, from 12 to 31, affecting districts with millions of people. Two judicial nominees pending for over six months have not yet had a confirmation hearing—although if confirmed, both would end a judicial emergency.

As a country that presents itself as a leader among nations when it comes to rule of law, the corruption of the process of selecting judges in a partisan manner ought to be an international embarrassment. And the only way that embarrassment will motivate change is if American voters organize to call on their senators to end the charade of pretense that surrounds confirming judges today—the pretense that in effect says,

"Nothing to worry about, just move along." What needs to move along is the Senate confirmation process with a much greater degree of transparency, or the damage to our system of justice and, more importantly, to those individuals depending on it, will only intensify.

Mr. LEAHY. This is not just occurring in one or two courts across the country. Judicial vacancies have dramatically risen in courts throughout the country because of Senate Republicans' virtual shut down of the confirmation process. Mr. President, in fact, because of the unprecedented nature of Republican obstruction, vacancies have increased by more than 50 percent, from 43 to 68. Additionally, the number of Federal court vacancies deemed to be "judicial emergencies" by the non-partisan Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has increased by 158 percent since the beginning of the year. There are now 31 judicial emergency vacancies that are affecting communities across the country.

The women and men who have been nominated are all highly qualified, outstanding public servants. Many of them have the support of both Republican and Democratic Senators in their States. In fact, those pending on the floor were all voted out of the Judiciary Committee in voice votes. Every single Republican and every single Democrat was supported. Those home State Republican Senators who have issued press releases and have publicly supported their judicial nominees should take the next step and ask their leader to schedule up-or-down votes.

Judge Luis Felipe Restrepo was nominated last year to fill an emergency vacancy on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Pennsylvania. If confirmed, Judge Restrepo will be the first Hispanic judge from Pennsylvania to ever serve on the appellate court and only the second Hispanic judge to serve on the Third Circuit. In fact, the Senate unanimously confirmed him 2 years ago to serve as a district court judge, but Judge Restrepo, who is highly qualified, is being blocked by the Republican majority from being confirmed.

He has bipartisan support from both Pennsylvania Senators. He was voted out of the Judiciary Committee by voice vote. He has the strong endorsement of the nonpartisan Hispanic Bar Association. In fact, at his confirmation hearing Senator TOOMEY stated: "There is no question [Judge Restrepo] is a very well qualified candidate to serve on the Third Circuit." Senator TOOMEY described Judge Restrepo's life story as "an American Dream" and recounted how Judge Restrepo came to the United States from Columbia and rose to the top of his profession by "virtue of his hard work, his intellect, his integrity."

So given these remarkable credentials, his wealth of experience and strong bipartisan support, the Senate should have confirmed him months ago. Instead, for 10 months, since Judge Restrepo's nomination back in

November, 2014, he has been denied a vote of confirmation. Every single Senate Democrat has said they will vote for him, but he is being denied a confirmation vote by Senate Republican leadership. No one doubts he will be confirmed once the majority leader decides to schedule this vote. If he would take the time to schedule the vote, he could be voice-voted 5 minutes later.

I have heard Senator TOOMEY indicate his strong support and that he would like to see Judge Restrepo receive a vote, but I have yet to see him ask for a firm commitment on a vote. I have a feeling that people in Pennsylvania are wondering when this long-standing and emergency vacancy of the appeals court will be filled, when this body will stop turning its back on Pennsylvania, when the Republican leadership will allow Pennsylvania to have their voice on the circuit court.

Besides Judges Drozd and Restrepo, there are 14 other highly qualified judicial nominees with bipartisan support pending on the Executive Calendar. We should be voting on all of them today. Instead, we will only vote on Judge Drozd.

Judge Dale Drozd is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California. Since 1997, he has served as a Magistrate Judge in that same court, and has been serving as the Chief Magistrate since 2011. Over his 18-year career as a Magistrate Judge, he has presided over 1,100 cases. Prior to that, Judge Drozd was in private practice at two different law firms for approximately 14 years. While in private practice, Judge Drozd earned an "AV Preeminent" rating from Martindale-Hubbell from 1990 to 1997, and was also listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* publication from 1995 to 1997.

He was voted out of the Judiciary Committee by voice vote and has the support of his two home State Senators, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BOXER. The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously rated Judge Drozd "well qualified" to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, its highest rating. I will vote to confirm Judge Drozd.

After we confirm Judge Drozd today, I would urge the Senate Republican leadership to schedule votes for the remaining 15 consensus judicial nominees on the Executive Calendar without further delay. But the Republican leadership continues with this obstruction. If home State Senators cannot persuade the leader to schedule a vote for their nominee soon, it is unlikely that even the highly qualified nominees who have Republican support are going to be confirmed by the end of the year.

This would certainly be the case with Judge Restrepo of Pennsylvania, who was first nominated back in November 2014, nearly a year ago. This would also be the case with two Tennessee district court nominees, one of whom was also first nominated in November 2014, and

another who was first nominated in February 2015. These are nominees from states with Republican home state Senators, and who would fill vacancies where they are very much needed.

Let's stop this obstruction. Let's follow what I did with President Bush, stop the needless delays, schedule Judge Restrepo's confirmation vote this week and the other 14 pending nominees without further delay. If you did that, you would be up to two-thirds of what we did for President Bush at this time in 2007.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we are having a lot of trouble moving judges, but today we are moving a judge, Judge Dale Drozd for the Eastern District Court of California.

It has taken a year since his nomination. It will be a year in November to get to this point. The Eastern District Court of California is in a state of judicial emergency, so I am so glad we are going to add this good man to the court. Cases are piling up because we don't have enough judges to review them, so Judge Drozd's leadership is desperately needed.

This position on the Eastern bench, again, has been vacant since October of 2012, and Judge Drozd is an excellent candidate to fill it. He received his bachelor's degree in 1977 from California State University at San Diego and his law degree from the University of California at Los Angeles, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif.

He began his legal career as a law clerk for a district judge in the same judicial district where he now serves. Following his clerkship, he worked in private practice in Sacramento and San Francisco for 15 years.

In 1997, he was appointed to serve as a magistrate judge in the Eastern District of California. Four years later he became the chief magistrate judge.

Judge Drozd's 18 years on the bench serving the people of the Eastern District and his previous years in private practice make him an excellent candidate to fill this vacancy. He also received a unanimous "well qualified" rating from the American Bar Association.

He is a noncontroversial nominee who has bipartisan support, including praise from two judges in the Eastern District who were both appointed by President George W. Bush. Judge Lawrence O'Neill wrote to me and said:

At this point of desperation in the Eastern District of California, every day of delay makes an enormous difference. . . . Needing help is a severe understatement.

This is what a judge who was appointed by George W. Bush said.

Any person in a position of authority relating to the confirmation of this nominee should focus on his bipartisan support.

I think that is important. This nominee has broad support from both political parties. Chief Judge Morrison C. England said Judge Drozd "has all the attributes needed to be an outstanding addition to the district court bench in Fresno." He continues: "I know he has bipartisan support and I certainly support and encourage his confirmation at the earliest possible time."

I am glad we are voting to confirm Judge Drozd today. The people of the Eastern District of California need his leadership, and the overworked judges of the Eastern District need his help. I hope maybe we can start to move these nominees forward.

MASS SHOOTING IN OREGON AND GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. President, if I might speak on another topic at this time.

I just wanted to send my condolences to those who were impacted by the tragic mass shooting in Oregon. As many have said, as we pray for those who are fighting to survive and for the families who are grieving, we have to do more than pray. We have to stop this.

I know we can't stop every single tragedy from happening, but I have to say, if you look at my home State, we have passed some very commonsense laws. We don't have a gun show loophole. That is important. If it is important to get a background check from a federally licensed dealer, it is important to get a background check at a gun show. It is important to get a Federal background check online.

We have to make it harder for people who want to get guns for nefarious reasons—not to protect their families but sometimes to harm their families, harm their communities.

I want to say that after Senator FEINSTEIN and I went through one of these horrible experiences with some of our communities, we introduced a bill which would give parents and families of mentally disturbed young people a chance to go to court and intervene so that individual would not have this weaponry, because we knew in the last incident in California where a gunman came down and shot up people sitting in a cafe, that the mother was desperate to try and warn law enforcement that this was going to happen and to intervene, but there was no pathway for her to go.

This bill that we call the Gun Violence Intervention Act is very simple. It says if a family member knows and believes someone in their family is mentally unstable, is buying a gun, and may well use it, give that family member a pathway forward to intervene in the situation.

I don't know who could be against this because a judge will be objective. If somebody is doing it or if a mom is doing it just out of whole cloth and

there is no reason, the judge will not allow it.

I am proud to say that California has passed a nearly identical bill and it will go into effect in 2016. Then, in California, if you see someone in your family who you know is acting strange, who you know is making threats, who you know is buying weapons, you have the ability to intervene and take your story to a judge and prevent these kinds of tragedies. That is just one example of some of the commonsense measures we should be taking up.

My heart goes out to the families, but I have to say I agree with the critics who say don't just come to the Senate floor and say your heart goes out to the families. That is not enough. So I am calling on this Senate to do something.

Wednesday we are going to have a press conference that Senator BLUMENTHAL has organized to talk about a very important but small loophole-closing he is recommending.

At this time I yield the floor, and the remaining time I would give to Senator NELSON.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I am certainly going to help Senator BOXER. On the question about guns, I am an old country boy. I grew up on a ranch and grew up with guns, but guns should be for hunting, not for killing. One of the most commonsense measures is a measure that you ought to have background checks, such as in gun shows, where guns are sold to get around the background check law.

TRANSPACIFIC TRADE AGREEMENT AND TOBACCO WARNING LABELS

Mr. President, this Senator came to the floor on a happier note, to congratulate our Ambassador, the U.S. Trade Representative, for successfully completing the negotiations with 11 other nations in the Pacific Rim on this transpacific agreement.

One of the items in there I had dug my heels in because we heard in Australia they had a law that required tobacco companies selling cigarettes to put a warning label on the cigarette package, just like we have to do in America—a warning about the hazardous effects of smoking.

Lo and behold, it is now in a tribunal called the Investor-State Dispute Settlement, which had basically governed trade agreements between countries, and they were throwing out Australia's law that said you had to have a warning on a cigarette package.

So having been involved from the beginning in Florida with the return of money from the tobacco companies to the government of Florida for all of the medical expenses Florida had borne under Medicaid, having removed tobacco stocks, as one of the three trustees of what governed the Florida pension plan, and removed tobacco stocks from the Florida pension fund, I am here to say hallelujah.

The fact is that our Pacific trade agreement is going to honor the laws of

countries that want to cut down on tobacco use. As they referred to it in the trade agreement, it will exempt from the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism anything in a country with regard to tobacco control. This is a win for the health care advocates who are trying to keep our people informed about the hazards, what smoking tobacco will do to their health.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back all time.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Dale A. Drozd, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California?

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 69, nays 21, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 274 Ex.]

YEAS—69

Alexander	Franken	Murkowski
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murphy
Baldwin	Graham	Murray
Bennet	Grassley	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hatch	Paul
Booker	Heinrich	Perdue
Boxer	Heitkamp	Peters
Brown	Heller	Portman
Cantwell	Hirono	Reed
Capito	Isakson	Reid
Cardin	Johnson	Sanders
Casey	Kaine	Schatz
Coats	King	Schumer
Collins	Kirk	Shaheen
Coons	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Corker	Leahy	Tester
Cornyn	Lee	Thune
Daines	Manchin	Tillis
Donnelly	Markey	Udall
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Ernst	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—21

Barrasso	Cotton	Inhofe
Blunt	Crapo	Lankford
Boozman	Fischer	McConnell
Cassidy	Gardner	Moran
Cochran	Hoeven	Risch

Roberts	Sessions	Sullivan
Sasse	Shelby	Wicker

NOT VOTING—10

Burr	McCain	Toomey
Carper	Rounds	Vitter
Cruz	Rubio	
Enzi	Scott	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from South Carolina.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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.

DISASTER IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I just returned from South Carolina. I am sure many Members of the body have been watching this drama unfold on television. I have never seen anything like it. I was in the Charleston area over the weekend. There was 18 inches in about 24 hours, and Columbia, SC, is really under siege. It is a thousand-year historic rain. I am not a meteorologist, but it seems as if everything bad that could happen did happen to send the water and the rain to South Carolina. All 46 counties have received Federal emergency declaration. There has been a verbal request for a major disaster declaration for 11 counties; 1,300 National Guard deployed and 7,000 more on standby; the entire State trooper force is on the road; 1,250 South Carolina DOT maintenance employees working; 550 road closures; 150 bridge closures; 26,000 and climbing without power; 40,000 and climbing without water; there have been 9 deaths.

The economic damage—we don't know yet. There will be an insurance component, and there will be a disaster relief component. As we get through this and look at the damages—that comes later—we are not going to ask the Federal Government to do anything beyond the responsibility of the government. We will not turn this into a pile-on party.

The bottom line is I really appreciate my colleagues coming up and offering their assistance and their prayers to the people of South Carolina. Our Governor and the entire infrastructure of the emergency management system in South Carolina have done a very good job.

More is coming. The rain is about to depart the area, but we will have runoff

from upstate of South Carolina that will flow down to the coast and run right through the communities that have been hit the hardest. So there is a second wave of water coming.

My sister lives in the Columbia area, and I can say there are very few families in South Carolina not affected by this. Manning, SC, is virtually underwater. "We are thinking about the people of South Carolina" is what I have heard from all of my colleagues. Senator SCHUMER called. The Vice President called. I appreciate all of your concern and prayers. We will hopefully get this behind us soon in terms of the rainfall and start building up some levees and dams that are just about to break. I worry about the bridges and the damage to our bridges. I don't think we really appreciate how extensive it is.

This is sort of the worst of nature coming our way, but I think we met it with the best of human nature. From what I can tell, people have been working together trying to slug through this. And I will just echo what the Governor said: Stay in your homes. Get off the roads. It is so dangerous down there. Anybody who has to be rescued because they are out looking around and taking photos is draining resources from the people who are under siege.

So on behalf of TIM SCOTT and myself, we are going to do whatever we can, with our House delegation, to make sure our State is taken care of in an appropriate fashion. Hopefully by the end of this week we will begin to survey the damage, but unfortunately there is more coming as the runoff from upstate makes its way to the coast. This was literally a perfect storm of things coming together to take water from the hurricane and create a river of rain. I have never seen anything like it, and I have lived in the State all my life.

To the people without power, whose houses are underwater, whose cars have been devastated, those who have lost loved ones, we are definitely thinking about you. We are pulling together in our State.

Mr. President, 2015 has been a miserable year for the State of South Carolina. Some of the worst things have happened, and we are still hanging in there. Everybody is clinging to each other in a very heartwarming way. And I am sure there will be exceptions to that rule—curfews are in place—but the vast majority of South Carolinians are rising to the occasion.

I was talking to the Governor last night. We can't wait to get this year behind us. And I cannot tell you, from the Charleston shooting to this, how tough it has been for our State. But when it is all said and done, we are going to be together and come out stronger.

To the families who are thinking the world has come to an end, God willing, it will get better. The water will pass, we will start surveying the damage, and we will help those who need help.