

Hurricane Irma caused extensive damage to vessels, facilities, docks, equipment, and gear, especially in the Keys. Many in the spiny lobster industry lost all of their traps. The disaster supplemental appropriations gave NOAA \$200 million for Federal fishery disasters like the one that Secretary Ross declared for Florida. Where is the money?

Let's talk about the broader impact to the oceans. Did you know that Florida's coral reef tract is the third largest barrier reef in the world? It is a reef that starts south of Key West and goes all the way up the coast, almost all the way to Fort Pierce. The coral supports the spiny lobsters and the stone crabs, which are served in restaurants around the country. This industry is important to Florida's economy.

Hurricane Irma tossed all manner of debris around. Monroe County has already spent almost \$20 million to remove over 2 million cubic yards of waste—roofs, appliances, bicycles, trailer homes, and boats. The debris was also swept into the water, which is threatening the corals, and into the canals, where it blocks transportation.

I want you to take a look at this picture. This is one of the canals in the Keys. Look at what is sitting in the canal—a whole mobile home that was lifted up from the mobile home park on this side of the canal. There it is, in the water.

Take a look at this. Do you see what is in the canal? Do you see out here? That is the ocean. This canal is coming right in. What happens is that eventually some of the debris goes into the Atlantic. It gets near the reef. Some of it submerges. The wave action is sending it back and forth.

You can imagine any one of those pieces of debris knocking constantly into delicate coral that is already diseased, that is already overheated because the rising temperature of the water. You can imagine what is happening. Whether it is a mobile home sitting in the canal or whether it is all of this junk that is sitting in the canal and that eventually goes out, this is what we need help with.

It has been over a month since we passed the disaster supplemental appropriations bill. Why isn't the money flowing? That is what I called the Secretary of Commerce about this morning. I told him: Mr. Secretary, my request is very, very simple. Just get the money out. The money is appropriated. It is there.

I said: Mr. Secretary, will you please crack the whip on NOAA so that you can get this money out and we can get this place cleaned up, as well as protect those coral reefs from the damage they have already undergone?

Then I said: What happened in this storm is, whether for lobster or stone crab, the traps were all swept away. The poor fishermen don't have any traps. They need help too. That is what this disaster appropriations bill is for. Mr. Secretary, you have to crack the whip to get them going.

Unfortunately, this is not the only issue we are facing. Florida's citrus industry suffered over \$760 million in losses from the storm. Why? Because the trees were full of fruit that was going to be picked within just a few weeks. Along came the storm; the winds were severe. In Southwest Florida, some of the citrus crops were 100 percent lost. In fact, the winds were so high that they ended up uprooting citrus trees. Further north, in Central Florida, the groves there lost 50 to 60 percent of their crops.

The citrus industry cannot survive those kinds of losses, and that is why we have a disaster appropriations bill. There were losses of over \$760 million from the storm. The rest of Florida's agriculture took a big hit, too, with an estimated \$2.5 billion in total damages.

In February, we finally came through with \$3.8 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Of that money, \$2.6 billion was supposed to go directly to farmers and ranchers. It is March, and those folks haven't seen a dime.

After I talked to the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, I put in a call to the Secretary of Agriculture. I have called several times today. I have yet to connect with him. If any of his staff are listening, there is a bottleneck at the USDA that is preventing this money from going to the families who desperately need it. I will continue to call Secretary Perdue to ask him to do what I asked Secretary Wilbur Ross to do: Crack the whip on his organization to get the money flowing. That is why we passed supplemental emergency appropriations. Now the Federal agencies need to get the money out the door.

This is so frustrating because the administration knew that Congress was discussing a disaster supplemental bill when Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in August. Then Irma hit, and then Maria hit.

Six months later, most of the Federal agencies are just starting to dust off their pencils and figure out how they are going to allocate the funding. What is wrong with you? People are hurting. They are going bankrupt. You have to get that money out.

Can you imagine how you would feel if your family's entire citrus crop had been wiped out and you had been holding your breath waiting for disaster assistance funding, which finally came over a month ago, and then you were told by the folks at the USDA that you were going to have to wait for several more months until USDA figures out how to get you the money? It is no wonder that people are fed up with bureaucracy.

Additionally, many of our cities and counties have yet to see any reimbursements from FEMA for Hurricane Irma. In fact, many have yet to be fully reimbursed for Hurricane Matthew, which struck almost 2 years ago. Unbelievably, all those counties that were devastated had paid for the debris removal. The State of Florida missed the deadline—didn't turn it in on time.

Of course, what we had to do to cover the State of Florida's mistake was to plead with FEMA: Forget the mistake; it is the local counties and cities that need the money.

Not getting the money out is totally unacceptable. While we are still waiting for reimbursements from these storms, how can we expect these local governments to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season that will start in just a few months, right around the corner?

Let me say it again. This is unacceptable for the slow-walking—the foot-dragging—that is going on in getting the money out the door. I am going to keep pounding on this until the folks in Florida start getting the help they need and deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, since I see no other Senator who seeks recognition, I thought I would take the occasion to bring the Senate up to date on what is happening down in Florida in the aftermath of 17 people being gunned down at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

As we know, we have seen those students speak out with a boldness and clarity that is rarely seen, and they are not being intimidated at all as to what needs to be done. As a matter of fact, in the aftermath of the shooting—and while some of the funerals have still been going on—since our Florida State Legislature is in session, over the course of 2 weeks, the students have gone to the capital city of Tallahassee and have held individual meetings with State legislators. They have held a rally outside of the capital and insisted that maybe—just maybe—this might be a time that the State legislature should confront this issue head-on: that, in fact, there was something to the fact that a weapon that was originally developed for the military, an AR-15—the semiautomatic version of a military weapon—could do such damage and quickly go about killing so many people. It was 17 in the case of the high school.

Just 2 years earlier, it was 49 people in Orlando at the Pulse nightclub. In between, we saw several mass killings with high-powered, military-style assault rifles in Texas, as well as 59 people being gunned down in Las Vegas.

Last week, I talked about the assault weapon, and I have since had, over the weekend, constituents in Florida ask me to come back and speak on the floor of the Senate about the difference in the damage—the mayhem, the carnage, the slaughter—that occurs as a result of an assault rifle as compared to a handgun. You don't have to take it from this Senator. You can talk to the trauma surgeons. You can talk to the radiologist in the trauma center. As a matter of fact, several articles in the past week have been written in various publications in Florida and in the national press, along with there being

photographs to show the difference. Let me paraphrase the words of one of the trauma surgeons in Broward County who attended to some of the victims.

He cited that on any normal night, particularly on a weekend, they have to treat gunshots. If that gunshot is from a handgun—say, a .22 pistol or, say, a .9 millimeter pistol—the bullet will enter the victim, and unless that bullet goes to a critical organ, such as the heart or, for example, to the blood supply going into the liver, that bullet will continue through. If it comes out the other side, it will come out with a hole that is the same size as when it penetrated the body in the first place. It is not so with a bullet from an assault rifle because those weapons, which are developed for the military, are clearly for killing.

The bullet, first of all, comes out at three times the speed—three times the velocity. Therefore, when it hits its target, it hits with three times the energy. Often, the bullet is designed so that when it hits the target, it will tumble and just tear through and destroy any flesh in its path, including bone and organs.

The trauma center's radiologist explains that if a handgun's bullet, such as a .9 millimeter, goes through the liver, they can usually save the patient's life. They point out that of almost all handgun wounds, they can save the life unless the bullet hits a major artery or organ, like the heart, or a major blood supply. It is not so with the bullet from an assault weapon. The bullet enters at three times the velocity, with three times the energy. It starts tumbling, ripping away flesh. If it goes, for example, to a kidney or to the liver, it pulverizes that organ and comes out the other side of the victim with a hole as large as an orange.

That is the difference between a handgun wound and a wound from a high-velocity assault rifle, whether it is a semiautomatic or whether it is an automatic. It was made automatic, with what we saw in Las Vegas, with the bump stocks. He made a semiautomatic, which was legal to purchase, into an automatic rifle. It is because of that carnage that one has to ask oneself: Would any American citizen want to have those kinds of assault rifles loose on the streets for people who want to use them for dastardly purposes? I think the answer is no.

This Senator grew up on a ranch. I have hunted all of my life. I still hunt with my son, but an AR-15 is not for hunting; it is for killing. It is an understanding of the difference of these weapons that is causing the American people to gradually understand that these kinds of weapons have no place on the streets of America.

One can imagine the SWAT team. Had they been there while the shooter had still been inside and had they entered that school and tried to find the killer and known that what they were going to come up against was an AR-15

instead of a handgun, that would have been a terrible thing. One can imagine, if there had happened to be an armed guard with a pistol and he had gone after the shooter but the shooter had had an AR-15, that would not have been a fair firefight. With a pistol against an AR-15, one can imagine who is going to win that fight.

These are the questions that the American people need to have answered as we go through these discussions about what to do. Thus, when these students all gather in Washington and in 100 cities around this country on March 24—a Saturday—and start marching in untold numbers, they are going to be asking: Isn't enough enough? Haven't we come to the point at which we ought to reexamine that the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms but if these are the arms we want borne on our streets?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). The Senator from Georgia.

NOMINATION OF TILMAN SELF

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise out of a great sense of pride to exercise one of my responsibilities in the U.S. Senate to speak on behalf of Tripp Self, a judge from the Georgia courts, who has been nominated to become a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia. The vote will take place not too long from now, and I encourage every Senator to cast his vote for Judge Self. He is the whole package.

He has a wonderful wife and family and four great children. He worked in the private sector for years and accomplished many things in the private sector. He went to the University of Georgia School of Law and graduated cum laude and summa cum laude from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, and went on to have a distinguished private career. He then served as a superior court judge on the Macon Judicial Circuit for the State of Georgia. In that job with the superior court, he did something that I am very close to. He is an entrepreneur because he started the Veterans Treatment Court for the Middle District of Georgia and for that judicial circuit.

The Veterans Treatment Court, as all of you know, is a court that is formed to help veterans who stray from the law or who have difficulties when they come home either because of PTSD or TBI. It helps them with the struggles of battle that they have had and with whatever problems they may have had from representing us on the battlefield. They trip and they fall, and they need somebody to help get them up. We want to make them do the right thing but also help them get themselves brushed off, look forward to careers, and help them get that step forward. We do that with teenagers with what are called CASAs, Court Appointed Special Advocates. We turn people around who otherwise might go to jail—young kids. The Veterans Treatment Court takes those who have

risked paying the ultimate sacrifice—that of their lives for you and for me and for everybody else—who might have fallen off just a little bit. When we get them back into the judicial system, we get them straightened out, and we move them forward so they have better lives and rewarding careers of their own—thanking them for all of the things they have done for us as veterans.

As the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate and as one who recognizes the value of the court system for all of the things it does to administer justice, I am particularly proud to have a judge who has used his entrepreneurial skills to deal with a problem our society has in the legal sense and in the court sense and to see to it that our veterans are getting the help they need and that our communities are getting the representation they need.

I am also a football fan. I know calling football games is tough, just as making judicial decisions is tough. Tripp Self officiates NCAA football in the Southern Conference. Two years ago, he was selected to do the 2017 FCS national championship game, which is a testament to his ability to call balls and strikes on the field.

He is a pretty good shot too. He is a turkey hunter and likes to turkey hunt and likes the outdoors.

Most importantly, he loves the United States of America. He respects and loves the law for what it does. We are a nation of laws and not of men. He does everything in his capacity as an individual and as one on the bench to see to it that our country is a better country and our State is a better State—the State I represent, Georgia.

When each Senator turns to vote in a few minutes on the confirmations of the three judges that will come before us today, when it comes to Judge Tripp Self, of Georgia, may each cast a vote proudly for someone who is a legal entrepreneur for veterans, one who has served with distinction in the State as a private sector practicing attorney and on the bench already, and one who will serve the United States of America very well in the years to come.

I commend him and his family for being willing to take on this responsibility, and I thank the President of the United States for the wisdom to make this appointment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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 question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Scholer nomination?

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and