

Laura destroyed or damaged more than 100,000 homes. Laura leveled or damaged almost every single building—every one—in the city of Lake Charles.

Then came Hurricane Delta right behind Laura in October of 2020. Delta left more than half a million Americans—rather, Louisianians and Americans, of course—without power, not just for a few minutes, not just for a few hours, for days.

That very same month, Hurricane Zeta tore through Louisiana. Zeta caused approximately 400,000 Louisianians to lose power and damaged many of their homes and businesses.

A few months went by, and now we are in February of 2021. A historic winter storm hit my State, froze my State, and 37,000 people lost power.

Now, even when temperatures warmed, we didn't find any relief because that May, historic rainfall soaked parts of my State. By parts, I don't mean a little bitty corner of my State; I mean big parts of my State. The rainfall drenched Lake Charles. Remember, I referenced Lake Charles with respect to Laura, which had already been battered. Twelve inches of rain hit Lake Charles. You know the result. If you get 12 inches of rain in a short period of time, as we did in Lake Charles, you are going to flood; I don't care if you live on Pikes Peak.

Then Hurricane Ida made landfall in August of 2021. Ida was one of the worst hurricanes ever to devastate my State and one of the worst hurricanes ever to make landfall in the United States of America. The only hurricanes that have matched its strength in terms of wind speed are Hurricane Laura and the Last Island Hurricane of 1856. Wind speeds for Hurricane Ida were clocked at well over 100 miles per hour; in some cases, 120, 135 miles per hour. Ida damaged more than 90,000 homes and caused roughly a fifth of all the people in my State to lose power—and I don't mean to lose power for a little while; lose power for days, weeks, months.

We are still catching our breath, as you can tell, but just as we were about to catch our breath, we had another hurricane, Hurricane Nicholas. It hit Louisiana with, depending on the area, between 5 and 10 inches of rain, and that was only a few weeks after Ida.

Now, after all of these floods, after all of these hurricanes, after all of these storms, after all of these catastrophic rain events, after this terrible string of disasters, FEMA is implementing Risk Rating 2.0, a plan that is going to make flood insurance virtually unaffordable for the people of America and for the people of Louisiana.

Louisiana families—again, we are not asking for your pity. We don't want pity in Louisiana. We are proud people. We are tough people. But we are tired, and we pay taxes like everybody else does. And just like some citizens in other States—Kentucky and New York, to name two—we need a little help.

We need to address all of these needs—not just for my State but for

the other States that need help—in our budget. If you add up the damage estimates from Hurricanes Laura, Delta, Zeta, and Ida, we are talking about 130,000 homes destroyed. According to estimates from my State back home, from the Governor and the legislature, Louisiana still needs hundreds of millions of dollars to help fix the damage Laura and Delta inflicted on our housing and the small businesses of Southwest Louisiana. Frankly—I mentioned Ida and the severity of Ida—the damages for Ida will probably cost a little more than \$2.5 billion.

We in Louisiana have recovered from natural disasters before, and we are going to recover from these, but we are going to need help to rebuild, just like the people from Kentucky are going to need help; just like the people from New York are going to need help; just like the folks, my fellow citizens out West, are going to need help to recover from wildfires.

I fought before to get disaster recovery relief for my people. I don't think I have ever voted against a disaster relief bill to help my neighbors in other States, and I am going to keep fighting. I urge my colleagues not to forget the people in Louisiana and the people of America who have suffered these natural disasters as we work out our budget.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, something happened today in Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee that I have never seen before in the U.S. Senate.

Three weeks ago, Senator TOOMEY—the ranking member, the senior Republican on the committee from Pennsylvania—Senator TOOMEY and I agreed that there would be a committee vote today for six nominees: Sandra Thompson, who would be head of the FHFA; Lael Brainard, Vice Chair at the Federal Reserve; Jay Powell, the Chair—sitting Chair, who has been nominated, to confirm him as the Chair; and then three new members of the Federal Reserve, Sarah Bloom Raskin, who would be Vice Chair of Supervision; also Philip Jefferson; and Lisa Cook.

This would be the—I think the best qualified, most diverse in terms of gender and race, but also most diverse Federal Reserve in terms of knowledge and perspective because one of the most poignant, I think, legitimate, criticisms of the Fed is how sort of the Federal Reserve has always kind of looked like me, except they think like Wall Street.

And this is the first time where I have seen a Federal Reserve with the

breadth of knowledge. There is a—the President wants to appoint a gentleman who grew up right near RFK Stadium in a poor part of Washington, who now is a dean at a southern school; another, a woman from a small town in Georgia, who is now at Michigan State; a former bank regulator and Federal Reserve Governor and also was No. 2 at Treasury; in addition to the two Federal Reserve members, Lael Brainard would be elevated to Vice Chair and Jay Powell.

That is just all background to show, Mr. President, the diversity and the breadth and the depth of these five members. And they would bring a perspective on our economy that matters to your voters in Connecticut and mine in Ohio; that they don't have this lean towards Wall Street. They don't have this sort of singular view of the Federal Reserve. They understand that the Federal Reserve should look at the economy through the eyes of workers.

We have a chance right now to appoint a Federal Reserve Board—the seven members of the Board—that really will put workers at the center of our economy. We really haven't had that. We have a President who does that now, I think we have a Senate that increasingly does that, and that will mean that we will pay—the Federal Reserve will pay attention to wages, the Federal Reserve will fight inflation. That is their job. They will do a number of things that will matter to our economy.

Now, this would be the first time that there would be a full complement of seven governors on the Federal Reserve. It is a seven-member board. President Trump never filled all seven of those jobs. President Obama, at the end of his term, tried to and didn't quite get there. So this would be the first time in a decade.

And what makes that important is that their job—they are tasked with fighting inflation.

We know part of the reason for inflation is the excess profits in the oil industry, the excess profits among the meat packers, the excess profits among the shippers and companies that are really taking advantage of shortages and taking advantage of the pandemic. We know that drives inflation. And we also know that some of our best tools are the Federal Reserve to fight inflation.

So what I said earlier, I have never seen something happen like happened today.

Three weeks ago, Senator TOOMEY and I, as I said, agreed to have this vote for these five nominees to the Fed and also the nominee for the Federal Housing Finance Agency and do those all together today. We agreed three weeks ago.

Senator TOOMEY didn't like the answers from Sarah Bloom Raskin. He said: I don't like the way she answered.

And how this works—for people that aren't in the Senate and do this every day—how this works is, after a hearing,

Senators on a committee can simply write questions. It is called QFR—questions for the record—that they didn't get to ask in their 5-minute slots in committee.

Well, Republicans, led by Senator TOOMEY, sent almost 200 questions to Sarah Bloom Raskin. It is clear Republicans don't want her. She has been too strong standing up to Wall Street, too strong speaking out about climate in the role that the Federal Reserve has in assessing risk based on climate in loan—in lending decisions of the Fed. She is not allocating credit or telling banks whom to lend to, she is just saying we should assess risk.

For instance, you don't—it is not really very good policy to loan—to write a loan for somebody in a flood plain when they have had hurricane damage year after year after year after year and to loan a lot of money for a business. I mean, things like that that the Federal Reserve needs to assess—the banks need to assess the Fed needs.

So what happened today is Senator TOOMEY, because he didn't like Sarah Bloom Raskin's answers—as I said, he sent almost 200 letters. She answered 200 letters from Senator TOOMEY and his colleagues in 48 hours, and then another Senator—another Republican Senator sent her several more letters, and she answered those—several more questions, and she answered those when she didn't have to. So she lived up to her side of the agreement and then some.

And so Senator TOOMEY didn't like her answers, so he pulled away every Republican member from our committee. So when we met today at 2:15, as planned for 3 weeks, as noticed by the committee officially about a week ago, no Republican showed up.

And maybe that wouldn't matter, except the Senate rules are you have to have one Republican at least show up. You need 13 members of the committee to conduct business. So we had 12 Democrats sitting in the room, and the other side of the room was empty; and we couldn't take action.

So what that means is we now have Jay Powell, Chair of the Federal Reserve—nominated to be Chair of the Federal Reserve, sitting, waiting; we have Lael Brainard, Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve, nominated, sitting and waiting; we have three people who aren't even on the board of the Federal Reserve yet—Sarah Bloom Raskin and Lisa Cook and Philip Jefferson—who are just in abeyance. And maybe it doesn't matter about the three of them. They are public servants; they chose to do this. What does matter is the Federal Reserve Board only has four people on it now, and I don't know when we are going to fill it because Ranking Member TOOMEY and the other 11 Republicans on the board have decided that they don't want to show up and do their job.

I mean, when we come to the Senate—I think the Senator—the Presiding Officer, the junior Senator from

Connecticut, knows this—you aren't given a little sheet that says here is what you do here. You vote yes—check the box yes, no, or I don't think I am going to work today. I think I am going to boycott a vote. That is not what you do. You vote yes or no. They have full rights to vote no and oppose these nominees—I assume they will oppose some of them—but they really don't have the right to just decide: I am going to take my ball and go home; that I am not going to work today; that we are going to boycott this vote.

So we all took an informal vote. All 12 of us voted—well, 11 of us voted for all 6, 1 of us voted for 5 of 6—and would have confirmed them overwhelmingly if Republicans had shown up and split their votes or whatever they would have done.

You know, it is just too bad. It breaks my heart. That is not how we have ever done things in the Banking, Housing Committee. I don't argue our committee is always bipartisan; it is not. But I do argue that most of the—pretty much all of us pretty much all the time, show up and cast votes and do our jobs.

I see there are new pages here on both sides of the aisle. This is the beginning, I think, of their second week. And, you know, I am sure they have learned from their textbooks, their college books. I am sure they watch us here and they think: Well, you know, I don't really like that Senator much or—he's kind of a nice guy, but he votes whatever. But they also know we take positions. You vote yes; you vote no.

And the last thing, and then I will yield the floor, is I have heard so many Republican Members talk about inflation day after day after day, and it is a problem we have to address. It is a problem we absolutely have to address. And they, of course, blame President Biden for everything, and that is OK. I expected that.

But they talk about inflation, but then at a time when we actually could address the problems with inflation, one of the most important tools in the Federal Government to address inflation is the Federal Reserve. And the Federal Reserve—seven members of the Federal Reserve sit with the 12 Fed presidents from around the country and they make decisions on monetary policy and they debate and discuss with a wide perspective of voices and a wide array of voices.

That is just not going to happen until they decide let's vote on these five members of the Federal Reserve.

So I wanted to inform my colleagues of that. Twelve of us showed up today, and 12 members didn't. They didn't have a really good reason except they don't like the answers that one of the Fed nominees gave, and that is simply not a good reason to refuse to do your job.

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

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, for three decades, the Violence Against Women Act has been at the forefront of our efforts to support victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. This legislation provides survivors with access to programs and resources that promote safety and healing. It bolsters our criminal justice response through protections for survivors and provides critical training for law enforcement officials. It prioritizes programs and grants to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault from occurring in the first place.

I have been a longtime victims' rights advocate, dating back to my time as attorney general of my State, and I am a proud supporter of the Violence Against Women Act.

And I think that is a common sentiment in this Chamber. Republicans and Democrats alike agree we must do more to provide services and protection for victims of domestic violence, even though we don't always agree on just exactly what those changes should look like.

Unfortunately, like many good bipartisan ideas, this became a political football over time. When the time came to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act in 2019, it was dragged through the gutter of Washington politics. Some of our friends across the aisle prioritized controversial partisan provisions over sound bipartisan policy. They even opposed a short-term reauthorization of the existing law when we couldn't agree. Ultimately, the Violence Against Women Act expired.

Here is the good news: For 3 long years, a bipartisan group of our colleagues has continued to work on a longer term reauthorization, and for a while it looked like we were making good progress.

Our friend from Iowa, Senator ERNST, is an unshakable advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and she has led efforts on this side of the aisle to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. She has worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to come up with something that is acceptable to both sides, but they have never been able to move past the controversial sticking points until now. Apparently, the tides have shifted, and I am grateful for that. After 3 years of waiting, we have seen real progress on efforts to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

Last week, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced legislation to extend and modernize that legislation, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of that. Senator ERNST from Iowa and Senator MURKOWSKI, our Alaska colleague, have