

the first responders in the panhandle who have been tirelessly working to get people out of harm's way and to contain the fires. At times, the fires have been traveling more than 200 yards per second. That is how fast these fires have been moving.

Right now, as this disaster is unfolding in Texas, the first priority is to contain these fires, to put them out. Texans are working to stop their spread. The weather has been a big factor. A few days ago, fortunately, there was some cold. There was some wet weather with snow and ice. That slowed the fires some, but then the weather got drier and windier, which are ideal conditions for spreading fire. So, right now, there are firefighters heroically battling massive fires, risking their lives.

When I was there, I was told that over 60 fire departments from across Texas and across the country have sent firefighters to battle the blaze. Monday night, I was at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and I saw the Houston fire chief. He told me Houston had sent firefighters all the way up to the panhandle to help battle the blaze.

To anyone in the panhandle who sees this, I want to ask you: Please listen very, very carefully to your local officials. Listen to emergency responders. If they give you an evacuation order, treat it seriously. Keep your families safe. At the end of the day, it is tragic when someone loses a home, but a home can be replaced. Your family members cannot.

This fire is dangerous, and our first priority needs to be preserving life and getting people out of harm's way. The second step is to shift to relief and rebuilding, and rebuilding is a process that is going to take years. In the short term, there are charities that have stepped up and are engaged, including the Salvation Army and the Red Cross and their local churches.

You know, I want to say something. I have been in the Senate for 12 years. Texas is a big State, and as a big State, we have our share of natural disasters—from hurricanes ravaging the gulf coast, to tornadoes doing enormous devastation, to this wildfire raging in the panhandle right now. As Texas's Senator, it is my responsibility to stand with those communities in a time of crisis and in the aftermath rebuilding.

Every time we have had a natural disaster in Texas, it is heartbreaking when you see the loss of life and the suffering, but, consistently, it is also inspiring. It is inspiring because of the reaction of Texans in a time of crisis. They come together, Texans helping Texans, holding on to each other, supporting each other.

When Hurricane Harvey hit the gulf coast and home after home was flooded, I remember Texans would go and rescue their neighbors. They were jumping on bass boats because the streets were flooded, and they would go from house to house, pulling people out

of harm's way. Rednecks in bass boats is what I called them, and it was the spirit of Texas. The beauty in that time is there are no partisan divisions. There are no Republicans and Democrats. People don't care about race or ethnicity or religion. It is just Texans helping Texans. That is what I saw in Fritch and Borger, that same spirit of Texans helping Texans.

I will tell you, in a time of crisis, the church steps up, and the church should. The church should show love.

When I was in the panhandle, I stopped at multiple churches and relief centers. I thanked the volunteers who were there. They were giving out food. They were giving out water. They were giving out diapers. They were giving out supplies for people who had lost everything, and I thanked them.

I visited with one woman whose home had burned down, and her daughter's home had burned down. Yet, I will tell you, she was smiling and was in good spirits.

She said: Do you know what? My family is alive and safe.

I mentioned that, in Fritch, 242 homes had burned down. The county judge told me, though, there were only half a dozen people in the local shelter they had stood up because everyone else whose home had burned down was presumably staying with friends or family or loved ones. It was other Texans who said: Hey, you lost your home; come stay with me. That is inspiring. It is powerful. That is what Texans do.

There are also things we can and should do at the Federal level to help the panhandle. With every local official, I assured: Do you have the Federal resources you need? Do you have the assistance right now in crisis?

Then, going forward, my office has been working hand in hand with State officials and local officials and is beginning to coordinate Federal resources to fight the fires. Indeed, I have already filed an amendment to the minibudget the Senate is considering right now to increase the funding for wildfire relief to help the people impacted by this. I will continue working on measures to provide disaster relief for Texans in harm's way—from the people who have lost their homes to our ranchers who have suffered the devastating loss of livestock. We need to stand with the panhandle and help recover from this historic disaster.

There is an old panhandle saying up there that people have "Panhandle Spirit"—a spirit of humility; a spirit of companionship; a spirit that when a neighbor needs help, by God, you help him. The whole country has seen that spirit in the past few days. Thousands of bales of hay and cattle feed have been trucked up daily from ranchers wanting to help out fellow ranchers. Hundreds of pallets of water and food and clothes have been donated to help people in need.

That same spirit that built Texas is the same spirit that makes the Lone Star State so unique. That is the spirit

that keeps our firefighters fighting the blazes, that keeps our ranchers rebuilding the fences and people picking up the pieces and rerooting in the land they love.

Together, with that same spirit and that same determination that people in the Panhandle Plains have had for generations, we will rebuild. We will come back even stronger than ever.

God bless our firefighters, and God bless our first responders. God bless all the Texans who have lost their homes in the past few days and those Texans who have lost loved ones. We are praying for you, and we will help you rebuild.

I would like to close by again talking about Chief Smith.

The loss of Zeb Smith has left a huge hole in the community. On social media, the Fritch Volunteer Fire Department wrote:

Just know that right now we are not OK. We love our chief, our brother, our friend. Please be patient with us.

The Hutchinson County Office of Emergency Management team stated about Chief Smith:

His exemplary leadership was evident in his tireless efforts over the past week, where he worked diligently to protect and safeguard his community and fellow citizens.

Chief Smith was a hero. His name will not be forgotten. In his honor, I had a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol to recognize his heroic service. Chief Smith gave his life on Tuesday of this week so that his fellow Texans could live.

To the family and friends and loved ones of Chief Smith, we are mourning with you, and we are celebrating a life well lived.

May God bless the people of Texas. We will defeat these wildfires.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

RADIATION EXPOSURE COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, nearly 80 years ago, in Central New Mexico's Tularosa Basin, at a place we now call the Trinity Site, the world as we knew it changed.

The Trinity test was the first detonation of a nuclear weapon in human history, and the families who lived downwind from the Trinity explosion have lived the consequences of that day for every moment of their lives. These families were never told that the white dust falling around them that day would contaminate their bodies, would contaminate the bodies of the children they had yet to bear, that it would contaminate the crops and the water and the livestock that they had built their communities around. They were never told about the kinds of cancers they would get, the conditions they would suffer through, or the loved ones they would lose.

These families still to this day have not received the recognition or the compensation for what they endured so that our Nation could be victorious in the Second World War. Nearly a century later, 80 years now, these folks deserve better. They deserve justice.

It is long overdue for Congress to finally, finally amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, RECA, to include the Trinity downwinders, to include all Americans who were directly impacted from our nuclear tests and program, and to include the uranium workers who were exposed to radiation in service to our national defense. That is what we are voting on this week in the U.S. Senate. Today, we have a chance to finally deliver justice for the Trinity downwinders and for all Americans who were exposed to radioactive nuclear materials.

I want to thank especially the Presiding Officer as it has been one of the honors of my career to fight alongside him for this expansion of RECA for our entire congressional careers.

I want to urge all of our colleagues to stand with us on the right side of history today and to support this legislation.

AGRICULTURAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, I rise now as the chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. For the better part of 9 months, I have been negotiating a bipartisan agricultural appropriations bill. My singular goal was delivering a bill that invests in rural communities, supports our farmers, and delivers for America's children. That is what our agricultural appropriations bill does. I am proud to have gotten us here, alongside Ranking Member JOHN HOEVEN and his great staff and with the immeasurable leadership of Chairwoman PATTY MURRAY.

Our bill will help farmers produce healthy food. It will support economic development in rural communities and help working families put food on the table.

As we went through the negotiations, I had to stand particularly firm to protect the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children—what most of us know as WIC. I can't think of a more important program and a more important constituency in our country than one that delivers food to babies and toddlers.

My constituents in New Mexico agree. Dr. Laurence Shandler is a pediatrician back home. As he put it in a letter to my office, the impact of delivering this support goes way beyond the food itself. Dr. Shandler shared how "children who receive WIC have improved birth outcomes, increased immunization rates, better access to healthcare, reduced healthcare costs, and better referrals to social services for families." He said:

Now is not the time to scale back on WIC.

I couldn't agree more.

I am proud to say that despite House Republicans' best efforts—and, believe me, they tried—we have fully funded WIC.

This is a major win for families across the country. We are ensuring that none of the 7 million women and

children who depend on this nutrition will be put on a waiting list or denied assistance outright.

I am also proud that we have fully funded SNAP—a program that helps 42 million Americans put food on the table each month. In doing that, we also blocked House Republicans' attempt to impose new redtape and ineffective restrictions on eligibility for Americans who count on SNAP, because what working families need right now is a government that will fight for them, not one that will make their lives more difficult.

Our bill fully funds Child Nutrition Programs—like the School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, and the summer EBT program—to ensure that children don't go hungry.

Our kids should be able to focus on learning in the classroom, on growing, and on making new friends, not worrying about where their next meal will come from.

We also are maintaining our strong support for the agricultural producers who grow our food. I know how much that means to the Presiding Officer. That includes maintaining support for vital agricultural research and our Nation's next generation of researchers through funding for both the Agricultural Research Service and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture.

These funds support scientific discovery at land-grant universities and research centers all across our country, including New Mexico State University in my home State.

Our bill also delivers investments to help our Nation's farmers and producers make their operations more resilient to an ever-changing climate. Farmers in New Mexico are grappling with dryer conditions, dwindling water supplies. And they are not alone. I know that farmers and producers are eager to improve the long-term health of their working landscapes. They just need effective tools to improve soil health, conserve water, conserve energy, and manage their natural hazard risks.

Speaking of managing risks and improving safety, our bill also supports the Food and Drug Administration's critical mission to protect the safety and the security of our Nation's supply chains for food and for medicine.

Our bill will also deliver important economic development investments to revitalize rural communities all across America. That includes support for the Rental Assistance Program at USDA that ensures Americans living in rural areas have access to safe and affordable housing.

We also delivered vital investments in public safety for our rural communities. I was very proud to secure millions of dollars of Federal funding that will help communities all across New Mexico. From Taos County to Anthony and Portales to San Juan County, we were able to fund fire engines and ambulances and build new emergency response facilities.

Finally, at a time of mounting international conflict and global food insecurity, we are reaffirming America's moral leadership in fighting hunger worldwide. Maintaining our support for international food aid programs not only demonstrates our Nation's commitment in the fight against hunger, but it helps us build new markets for our agricultural exports.

As we drafted this bill and steered it through negotiations with the House, we had to make some very difficult decisions on how to best invest taxpayer dollars. We had to stay within the very thin margins for topline funding levels that were agreed to last year by President Biden and House Republican leadership. But I am very proud of where we landed in this comprehensive, bipartisan legislation.

I especially want to thank the staff on the subcommittee for all the work they did to land this bill. I would just urge all of our colleagues to support these investments that will make a real difference for working families, for farmers who produce our food, and for rural economies.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MANCHIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 506, Adrienne Jennings Noti, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

Charles E. Schumer, Gary C. Peters, Tim Kaine, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Chris Van Hollen, Mark R. Warner, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, Alex Padilla, Brian Schatz, Mark Kelly.

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 Adrienne Jennings Noti, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.