

They are doing all that they can to get back on their feet for themselves and their families, for their communities. But the simple fact is they cannot do it alone. They need the Federal Government's help.

Thousands of homes need to be rebuilt, yet only a small fraction have begun the process. Small businesses need help rebounding. Critical infrastructure, including water and wastewater facilities, are not fully yet restored. A permanent site for the King Kamehameha III Elementary School is still under deliberation.

The needs are great, and there are many. And as resilient as the people of Lahaina have been thus far, they cannot and should not bear this burden alone.

While a strong Federal response to the fires has helped to complete the cleanup process ahead of schedule, much more help and a different kind of help will be needed in this next phase of recovery. As cleanup gives way to rebuilding, survivors will need significant financial assistance over a period of months and years. Building a home, building a store, building a community takes time and it takes resources.

These things don't magically appear overnight, nor do they happen without enormous Federal investments, which is why it is essential that Congress, as part of any forthcoming disaster aid package, includes flexible, long-term assistance in the form of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funding.

Short-term assistance to respond to the immediate aftermath of a horrific disaster is vital. But that isn't enough. It is not enough to clean up the wreckage and say: The rest is on you. The rest is on you.

The Federal Government's responsibility to help survivors does not end when the streets are clear. Walking away halfway through the process, leaving exhausted survivors high and dry, with no one to turn to, is not an acceptable or successful outcome.

Survivors in Lahaina and in more than 20 other States are not asking for a miracle. They are not asking for a handout. All they want to do is return to life as they knew it—to go to work, to drop off their kids at school, to come back to a home of their own—a life of stability, a life of safety, a life of security. And to do that, they need our help.

They need Congress to do the thing that they have always done, which is to show up for survivors and stick up for them for as long as they need help. It is my understanding that the administration will, in the coming days, submit to Congress an updated request of disaster needs.

And I want to be very, very clear. We cannot—we must not—leave town for the holidays next month without passing the long-term relief that survivors across the country need and deserve. This is not optional. We have to get this done.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all postcloture time on the Huitema nomination be considered expired and that the Senate vote on confirmation of the Huitema nomination at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, and that the Senate resume consideration of the Fung nomination; finally, that the cloture motion on the Fung nomination ripen at 5:15 today.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Cathy Fung, of California, to be a Judge of the United States Tax Court for a term of fifteen years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

HURRICANE HELENE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, with last week's election results, the American people have given Republicans an incredible mandate: Secure the border, strengthen the economy, restore law and order, and do so much more that is going to put this country back on the right track.

It is pretty amazing—70 percent of the American people feel like this country is on the wrong track, and we are going to need to wait until the new year to start fully enacting the strong, conservative agenda; and we are still going to have a lot to do here in this Congress before we are sworn in.

Now, I have got something to put at the top of that to-do list, and that is ensuring that our hurricane survivors in Tennessee and across the southeast receive the disaster assistance that they desperately need.

No one ever thought that such a storm would end up in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, but it did. And the damage assessments show what Tennessee is facing in our affected counties to restore our communities so that people are able to live; to work; to rear their families; so that the kids are able to go to school.

And we know that it is going to have quite a cost to it. The estimate for repairing roads, bridges, and infrastructure from Hurricane Helene tops \$510 million. Think about that. You have got an area in upper East Tennessee—7 counties—and you are looking at over a half billion dollars to repair the infrastructure.

Now, on top of this, we have got more than 1,500 homes that are not livable—503 of those homes were completely destroyed. And being on the ground in Tennessee, you have heard stories of how people saw their homes just being washed away.

And we know that this is going to take a while. Our Tennessee Emergency Management Agency has been on the ground from day one; and they are working with these homes, with these communities, and with the 209 businesses that have been impacted—and 36 of those companies were completely destroyed.

The total economic losses to Tennessee's agriculture and forest industries, meanwhile, have been estimated at \$1.3 billion, and that is according to the UT Institute of Agriculture.

So you can see devastating loss—devastating loss—from one area of Tennessee in these counties that border North Carolina and sit there along the Nolichucky River and the Doe River and the devastation that has been unprecedented.

I have found it really quite amazing that when you look at what happened in Southwest Virginia and North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, that the estimates are about \$50 billion in damages.

Now, as I mentioned, being on the ground really tells a story that is much more pointed and explicit than what you see in pictures or in video. And once you are on the ground, you can truly understand the devastation and the depth and breadth of this devastation.

I have been in upper East Tennessee and in every one of these affected counties five times, and I have visited communities that have been isolated because of road closures, because bridges have been completely washed out. I have talked with business owners that have lost it all, just have lost everything that they have worked for, and I have met with families whose entire homes have been washed away.

One family that I was visiting with in Johnson County, they were staying right there at the disaster relief agency because that is where they could find a place to lay their head, get a hot meal. The devastation is just unprecedented.

And in the middle of all of this, I have seen what makes Tennessee so unique. We are known as the Volunteer State. And, indeed, we do have that volunteer spirit. And seeing the way that neighbors have stood up and helped their neighbors and have come to their aid—food, shelter, clothing, cleaning supplies—indeed, if you were to go to the Bristol Motor Speedway—somewhere that people go to watch the races—what you would see is an entire building that has been turned into a command center and also a disaster relief center with pallets of water and food and cleaning supplies and linens and furniture and clothing, everything that is needed to get people back on the right track.

Now, I will say this: Our Governor—Governor Bill Lee—our State emergency management agency, and our local mayors deserve a lot of credit. These local elected officials are the first ones on the ground, and they were on the ground immediately—all of our

local law enforcement, our first responders, our county emergency management agencies—and they stepped up. They went into action, and they moved forward immediately to start to come around individuals who were losing it all, who were fighting to find people that they feared had lost their lives.

But we know that Federal support is going to prove vital to these communities being able to stand up. They are not asking for handouts. They are asking for help and a hand up so that they can rebuild.

And, unfortunately, what we are seeing is Tennesseans are struggling to get access to these Federal programs. Just 2 weeks after Hurricane Helene struck, we had the Small Business Administration announce that it had run out of funds for its disaster loan program. Now, the fiscal year started October 1; this storm happened on September 27, and you have the SBA saying 2 weeks into the fiscal year they have used every penny of their disaster loan program. And we know this is an essential lifeline for businesses to help them to stay in operation and to keep employees on the payroll.

And after spending almost half of its disaster budget in the first week of October, FEMA also warned that it may have to restrict funding for rebuilding efforts—that includes repairs for infrastructure and water treatment facilities.

This shortfall is absolutely inexcusable. The mismanagement is inexcusable.

Just days after Hurricane Helene struck Tennessee, I joined my Senate colleagues who represent the States impacted by the storm in calling for a Federal disaster relief package to aid rescue, recovery, and rebuilding efforts. We need to address the needs of our farmers whose crop fields face devastating flooding. I have joined the entire Tennessee delegation in urging House and Senate leadership to pass agricultural disaster assistance.

So with Congress back in session, we should waste no time. And before we get to next year's agenda, we should put at the top of the to-do list: addressing the needs of those who have been so devastated—their lives, their businesses, their homes—everything devastated by these floods.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the need to right a wrong. The National Football League and the Washington Commanders must do more to honor the Commanders' Native American heritage, as powerfully symbolized by the team's former iconic logo, and they must commit to never ever again censor it or degrade it.

Here is the story. This is a photograph from the 1960s of Blackie Wetzel and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Blackie Wetzel was a member of the

Blackfeet Nation in Montana and served his people and the country in many roles throughout his life, including chairman of the Blackfeet Tribe and president of the National Congress of American Indians.

In 1971, Blackie met with George Herbert Allen, who was then the head coach and the general manager of Washington's premiere professional sports franchise, the Washington Redskins. Knowing that Coach Allen admired and supported Native Americans, Blackie Wetzel encouraged him to replace the team's "R" logo with something that represented Indian Country. Blackie brought Coach Allen pictures of prominent Native American figures, including Blackfeet Chief Two Guns White Calf, who is pictured here on this poster board beside me.

On behalf of the team, Coach Allen adopted the now legendary logo that became the symbol of this storied franchise and among one of the most popular in league history.

Make no mistake, this logo was inspired, it was envisioned by Blackie Wetzel as a tribute to Native Americans.

By the way, it is not a character. It is a depiction of pride and of strength, a depiction of courage, of honor. In fact, as Blackie Wetzel said in 2002:

It made us all so proud to have an Indian on a big-time team.

And, I will tell you, support from the Wetzel family, the White Calf family, and the Blackfeet Nation remains as strong as ever today.

In fact, the Blackfeet Nation recently expressed their "wholehearted support" for the logo and urged the NFL and the Commanders to restore it to a place of "prominence and honor."

In fact, I will never forget Don Wetzel when he came to me 3 years ago—in fact, 3 years ago this very week—to share his father's remarkable legacy and to tell me directly the logo still mattered to him and to his family even after the team stopped using it.

Now, for context, the contributions of our Nation's Native American Tribes to our country's culture and heritage is beyond dispute. And this includes their service in the Armed Forces.

Do you realize that Native Americans serve our country in uniform at the highest percentage of any ethnic group? They are warriors for our country. And we honor them, and we honor all veterans this week.

Any franchise should be proud to be associated with Native American heritage. But, unfortunately, in February of this year, the NFL deliberately censored the logo on its official X account, as you can see here. They did this when honoring previous Super Bowl winners, and the Commanders are selling a shirt even today that does the same.

You might ask what I mean by "censoring the logo." Well, in the case of the NFL, they photoshopped graphics to cover up the logo on the team's helmet, as you can see here. This is John

Riggins. It is a picture of one of the great legends of Washington, DC.

And in the case of a shirt that was honoring Darrell Green, the logo is completely removed from the helmet, as if it were some sort of obscene image.

Now, this blatant censorship is outrageous, and it is offensive, not to mention hypocritical. Players wore the very same shirt in pregame warmups with one major difference. You will see here that the logo is proudly displayed, as it should be. We can see the logo. So why couldn't fans share the same enthusiasm by purchasing a shirt with a legendary player and a legendary logo?

And I have got to tell you, the censorship of honorable Native imagery certainly does not promote diversity, equity, or inclusion.

And let me be clear. Anyone who has been following this issue for the past few months knows this: I am not calling for the return of the former team name.

Let me say that again, because there are folks who twist this. I am not calling for the return of the former team name, which had become increasingly controversial, especially in Indian Country. But unlike the former name, the logo was rarely a subject of controversy; and, in fact, it was never alleged to be disparaging during the trademark disputes against the team that spanned many years.

And while some individuals might object to teams featuring any Tribal imagery, however honorable and realistic, there is no doubt in my mind that the overwhelming majority of fans in Indian Country and beyond believe that Washington's former logo is honorable, and it is a point of pride.

Look no further than the Blackfeet Nation's chairman of the Tribal council writing this letter supporting the logo. It was dated September 23, 2024. It was therefore wrong and simply unnecessary for the NFL and the team's former ownership to discard the logo and abandon its nearly 90-year connection to Indian Country.

Now, the good news is that the new Commanders owners have taken some positive steps since the May committee hearing on legislation related to RFK Stadium here in Washington. I applaud them for honoring Wetzel with a permanent memorial at Northwest Stadium. And I am told that censoring the logo on the Darrell Green shirt was an oversight, and it won't happen again when other Washington legends are featured on shirts in the future.

It is also my undersigning that the Commanders are continuing to have good-faith conversations with the Wetzel family on potentially allowing a new foundation, to be created, to use the iconic logo to draw attention to critical issues facing Indian Country.

I sincerely hope these conversations result in the team taking additional action to honor the Blackfeet Nation's contributions to the team's history and, frankly, the rich Native American