

simple. I have spent most of my career in business. If my senior staff didn't show up or my former partners at Pricewaterhouse didn't show up, we would find them another job.

We get this job, whether we want it or not, unless we resign. You can't fire us in the midterm or in the middle of our terms. But I can express my concern with giving CHUCK SCHUMER an easy way to beat Republicans who want to vote against and potentially defeat some of these very liberal judges.

So all I am saying—so that the press gets it right—people put words in my mouth at a private lunch. That is OK. People do that around here. I don't. But let me say what I said at lunch: 90 percent of success is showing up. If we were here on Monday night, we wouldn't have been here until midnight because we would have defeated CHUCK SCHUMER's opportunity to do it then.

If we are not here every single day—I had somebody ask me: Well, when do I need to be there for that Fourth Circuit nominee? When is that vote going to occur?

I said: When you are not here.

We have got to show up, folks. The American people expect us to show up for a job. These are my friends. These are my colleagues. These are people I work together with. But they let me down on Monday. They better not let me down for the rest of the session or every time we fail because we failed to show up. I will be back down here to remind my colleagues that the American people and the people who elected us in our great States want us to do our jobs. You can't do your job if you are not here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Georgia.

#### DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. WARNOCK. Madam President, I rise today calling on the U.S. Senate to immediately—immediately—approve the supplemental disaster assistance request sent to us by the President earlier this week so we can get Georgians and Americans all across our country the support they so desperately need following two recent storms: Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Sadly, these storms are becoming more frequent and becoming more destructive. And we will see again and again the need of the Senate to respond with the urgency that this demands.

I was pushing for additional disaster assistance for Georgians reeling from past storms before Hurricane Helene landed in our State; namely, following Hurricane Idalia last year and Debby in August of this year.

My office was on the frontlines of the Federal response to Hurricane Helene in Georgia, and I was proud to work with a bipartisan group with my colleagues, including Senator TILLIS and Senator BUDD of North Carolina, to kick-start this disaster funding process.

I want to thank the President for listening to the people of our State in ex-

pecting this request. I want to thank the Senate Appropriations Committee Chair PATTY MURRAY for acting on this priority today. It is something she and I have talked about over the last several weeks.

Since these storms tore through Georgia and much of the Southeast, we have seen light in darkness as communities come together to help one another, neighbors supporting neighbors.

I was down in Augusta a few weeks ago, and it was tough to see that devastation. But part of that light piercing the darkness could be seen in the eyes and in the effort of Robert Lanier of Lanier's Meat Market. I was driving. We were going down the street. I had my staff do a U-turn. And there was Robert Lanier, local business owner—Lanier's Meat Market—literally providing free food and water to his neighbors. The very food that he sells every day to take care of his family, he was giving it away to his neighbors—a light shining in the darkness.

I saw this in Homerville, Soperton, and Gibson, where my office hosted community resource clinics to connect Georgians to Federal officials and resources, helping some 200 Georgians in the process.

In Quitman and in Valdosta, my team and I hit the road to deliver food, healthcare supplies, and water to our neighbors in need.

I spent time with smalltown mayors all across our State that were desperately in need of a response.

And to date, FEMA has provided over \$229 million in individual and household assistance to Georgians in need and continues to operate numerous disaster recovery and other assistance centers across the State.

I am proud of the great work being done, and I applaud the public servants and the community leaders who make it all possible. But in my travels and in my conversations with these smalltown mayors, with Georgians, for folks especially in our rural areas, it is clear that more needs to be done, and that help cannot come soon enough.

In Ray City, I joined President Biden to survey a damaged pecan grove. An estimated one-third of the State's pecan crop was destroyed as well as cotton. Over 100 poultry houses were damaged or destroyed, and 8 million acres of timber in America's No. 1 forestry State were impacted. All told, we are talking about more than \$6 billion in total damages to Georgia's agriculture sector.

Too many of our farmers have taken too many hits with these storms over the years, which is why I pushed the President to send to Congress a request for additional funding immediately so we can give a lifeline to our hurting agriculture industry.

At its peak, Helene left more than 1 million Georgians without power, 300 boil water advisories across the State, over 200,000 homes with some level of damage, and countless communities facing a long road to recovery.

Most tragically, 228 individuals perished in Helene's devastation; 34 of them were Georgians, 6 of them were children. And so as we pray with our lips for those we lost, we must pray with our legs to help those still reeling and recovering from this devastation.

While Congress was out of session last month, because I understood the urgency, I called on the Senate to come back to Washington to pass additional disaster assistance funding. Weeks have passed since then, but the urgency remains.

While it may not be in the headlines, Georgians who were at the center of this devastation are living this every single day.

While I am here to remind my colleagues of the moral urgency to act, I know families and farmers back home still recovering. They are the ones who understand the dire circumstances, clearly.

There is one family in Augusta, GA, a married couple with two young elementary school-aged kids, who, following Helene—listen—are still residing in a house deemed 95 percent damaged. It is practically unlivable, their home. But they are still waiting on Federal support to move to either a temporary or a long-term housing solution.

Imagine that, waking up every day in a home that is 95 percent damaged. And as they navigate the stress and the trauma of this turmoil, the father continues showing up to work. He goes to work every day in order to provide for his family and then returns to their damaged home, waiting on us to show up to work and get the job done.

If we expect hard-working Georgians to do their job in the midst of a disaster, they should expect us to do ours. It is reasonable service. It is the least we can do.

The disaster assistance proposal before us would deliver a lifesaver for so many families, providing over \$20 billion to help farmers address crop and orchard losses; more than \$600 million to help them rehabilitate damaged land; \$375 million to support rural communities with housing, power, water, healthcare, and more; and \$40 billion for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund—the primary source of Federal assistance for Georgians impacted by Hurricane Helene.

There is also critical funding to fix our damaged roads and highways, support our small business harmed by the storms, and invest in public water and sewer system upgrades.

The only question is, What are we waiting for? There is no time for games, no time for delay, no time for partisanship, or politics. We must center the human beings, members of our families who are impacted by our policy, and the time to act is now.

We must approve this additional funding with bipartisan and bicameral support. And I will continue to do all I can until we get this done, and every dollar we allocate gets to the taxpayers'. After all, this is the taxpayers'

money and hard-working families trying to pick up the pieces of their lives. This is the work we must do, and it cannot happen soon enough.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the road ahead for Western North Carolina after the devastation of Hurricane Helene. And I acknowledge and appreciate my colleague from one of the Mountain States, Georgia—particularly Northern Georgia—and am reminded that we are rebuilding together.

For us here in North Carolina, Hurricane Helene represented one of the worst natural disasters to ever strike my home State—and I have seen a lot of natural disasters in North Carolina.

From Hurricane Helene, at last count, more than 100 people just in our State have been killed; hundreds more were injured; and some are still missing. Thousands of North Carolinians lost their homes. They lost their businesses.

And for small mountain communities in Western North Carolina, this horrific ordeal began Friday morning of September 27. When the storm hit an already rain-soaked area, the situation escalated into life and death within moments.

In the small town of what is the now-famous Bat Cave, NC—population 180—the town's fire chief, Steve Freeman, was at home with his wife. In advance of the storm, Steve parked his first car, a 1967 Mustang. He put it up on higher ground on a ridge above the family's shed. At around 8:45 a.m., he and his wife heard their house shake. He ran to the back of the house; he looked out the window, and he found that the car had already been swept downhill into the shed. Seconds later, he watched their Ford pickup get flipped upside down by the torrential flooding. Then he heard more rumbling noises, followed by shaking; and outside, he saw a mudslide barreling down towards the rest of the holler.

He ran for cover, but the collapsing shed took his feet out from under him and washed him several yards into a backhoe, where his head was pinned between the loader and what was left of the shed. His wife, who was watching in horror, thought that he was dead. But, in a moment he credits to the grace of Almighty God, Steve had just enough room to get his head out, and he went back inside to his wife. They escaped the area.

Steve later said:

I had my near-death experience, and that's when I knew God was here for me.

What is even more extraordinary is that, after this harrowing experience, the chief, Steve, began working for the safety of his community. Others might have called it quits, but he went to work. He and his firefighters—they mapped out the area, and they started digging people out.

Chief Freeman is one of hundreds of heroic North Carolinians who leapt

into harm's way to help others. That is the thing about the people of Western North Carolina: They are not just tough; they are mountain tough.

I had the pleasure of going to undergrad at Appalachian State in Boone years ago, and I have got lifelong friends who still call the region home. But if you spend any amount of time up there, you learn just how strong these people are in the mountains: These are proud and self-sufficient people. They are generous people.

For instance, take the story of Ethan Fowler of Slick Rock. He lives in Henderson County, and he volunteered to help rescue folks who were trapped. When he saw the storm debris that needed clearing in his neighborhood, he jumped on his own heavy machinery, and he did the job. Locals went up to him, and they offered to pay him; they offered him compensation for his work.

And Ethan replied:

It's just fuel.

He went on to personally help direct the National Guard and Federal officials as they arrived to clean up Gerton, Bat Cave, Lake Lure, and Chimney Rock.

This story and countless others like it are a perfect testament to the people of North Carolina. They are some of the most resilient people around. They don't look for handouts; they don't complain. The truth is they need us right now. Our government must be there to help them.

That is why it is incredibly disturbing to hear reports on the ground that they are still struggling to get in touch with representatives from FEMA. Now, of course, I don't want to denigrate the hard work of many of these hard-working officials who are trying to do the right thing, but when you hear the same story of a scatter-shot response and when you hear that same story over and over again, you know that something is dreadfully wrong.

You also know that something is wrong when we hear from a whistleblower at FEMA who claims that Federal officials directed a colossal event of avoidance against households with flags or yard signs supporting President Trump. This sort of weaponization of the government against people in their time of need is disgusting, and it is wrong, and there is going to be accountability for it.

As we hold these Agencies accountable, we in Congress have work to do, and no time to waste. So I am again calling on this body to quickly approve a supplemental bill to help fund the long-term recovery for the citizens of North Carolina. Congress should take up this bill without any further delay. Those of us from the region, regardless of party, I believe, support this.

Now, I realize that coming from someone like me—a dedicated fiscal conservative asking for this—it might sound, to some, out of place, but disaster relief is one of the essential functions of this government. Times like

these are precisely why we shouldn't overspend or waste taxpayer dollars in more prosperous times. Like any family or small business, we ought to be saving for a rainy day.

Ladies and gentlemen, that rainy day is today. In Western North Carolina, the temperatures are falling fast. Many people in my State are in real danger of facing a winter without heat because the storm destroyed the area's only kerosene station. We have people living in shelters with only the clothes on their backs because the hurricane wiped out their homes.

We have small shops, hotels, and restaurants that rely on tourism to operate, and some of those folks will be forced to shutter their businesses forever.

We have large sections of a major U.S. interstate highway that are still impassable and small mountain roads that are damaged beyond repair.

We have communities that are mourning the unimaginable loss of members of first responders and law enforcement.

We have some towns that I visited in the last month, like Hot Springs, Marshall, Burnsville, and Swannanoa, that are buried by flooding and mudslides, and there are towns like Chimney Rock that are mostly gone. Every day that I was present in the region, I was stunned by the enormity of the damage. It was unlike anything that I had ever seen.

This is not a situation where our government has the luxury of hand-wringing or deferring action for another few weeks or after another long recess. The citizens in my State—they need help and they need it now. This is why these men and women pay their taxes. This is their right as Americans, and we can't leave them behind. I believe, after having many conversations around the State, that that is their greatest fear: of being forgotten.

I will make my promise not to ever forget them, and my promise to the people of Western North Carolina is this: I will do everything in my power to see that you have the Federal resources you need to recover and to rebuild. I stand ready to work with my Senate colleagues and President-elect Trump to cut through the delays and provide the people of Western North Carolina with the resources they need as quickly as possible. We owe it to these fellow Americans to help them and help them now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, on Monday, President Biden submitted to Congress an emergency supplemental funding request for nearly \$100 billion to help communities across the country recover from disasters.

Whether it is Lahaina, Maui, or Burlington or Davenport or Asheville, every community that has had the misfortune of being struck by a disaster deserves help. No one is ever fully prepared for a tornado or a flood or a fire,

but everyone has to go through the long and difficult and painful process of rebuilding—rebuilding their lives, rebuilding their homes, rebuilding their stores, rebuilding their communities—which is why every time a disaster has devastated our fellow Americans, Congress has recognized the need for help and stepped up to fulfill our responsibility to provide that help. We don't first check to see if it is a blue or a red or a purple State or county.

And, today, disaster survivors in almost 40 States, including my own, are counting on us to do exactly that. They have had their lives turned upside down, and in the wake of awful death and destruction, they are trying to find some semblance of stability and peace in their lives. But, to recover quickly and fully, they need our help. It has been more than 15 months since Lahaina burned down to the ground—in a matter of hours—by ferocious fires. More than 4,000 homes were destroyed, and yet, as of today, just one home has been rebuilt—one home. There are 4,000 homes gone, 12,000 people without a house, 2,200 structures incinerated—1 home rebuilt.

Even before the fires, Lahaina was a working-class town where people were mostly renters, and while a disaster of this scale is catastrophic for any community, the financial burden inflicted on these survivors is especially, especially acute. Everyone is doing the best that they can to recover. They are working so hard. They have pulled together so much. They have so much courage and compassion and persistence. They have plowed through every barrier put in front of them. They have saved each other's lives. They are trying to rebuild this beautiful, historic, pluralistic, joyful, multicultural town, but they need our help.

This is a core responsibility of the United States Federal Government. There are certain things that we should be arguing about; there are lots of things that we should be arguing about. Among those things is, What does the Federal Government do, exactly? What is the Federal Government's role, exactly, in education? in healthcare? in transportation?

One thing we cannot argue with each other about is this: when your fellow Americans are in a situation where their counties, their churches, their communities, their States are just simply overwhelmed and cannot recover without the resources of the Federal Government, that the Federal Government steps up and does their job.

So we are about to wrap this week up before the Thanksgiving break, and then we have a tight, little work period to get a hell of a lot done. The one thing we cannot leave undone in December—the one thing we cannot leave undone in December—is disaster aid not just for the people of Maui but for people all across the country. If the Federal Government is for anything, it has to be for this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

#### REPUBLICAN OBJECTIVES

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, a few weeks ago, the American people spoke loud and clear. They rejected the policies that we have been seeing through this current administration. But, today, I rise to talk about the vision my Republican colleagues and I have for this future and the many solutions that we are eager to get back to work on that I believe will help get this country back on track.

First things first, this newly formed Republican Senate majority is ready to close the previous chapter. It is a chapter I think that none of us really want to go through again. Soon, the Resolute Desk will change hands, and the Senate, under the guidance of my friend and colleague and soon-to-be majority leader JOHN THUNE, will get to work. And we have the full support of the incoming President, President-elect Trump.

The American public wants to see real action. Back home in my State of West Virginia, people have conveyed to me that they are ready for real representation—a government of, by, and for the people. Senate Republicans will deliver responsive and responsible solutions for the American people.

The task ahead is this: unshackling the American economy, securing the border, unleashing our American energy, reducing crime and lawlessness, and restoring American strength and deterrence on the world stage. These are the issues on which the voters placed their faith in us.

I also believe that central to this mandate for this new American leadership is the idea that people really did feel better and preferred their lives under the Presidency of President Trump. I know for sure I did.

So as the Senate fulfills its responsibility to pass legislation to get this country back on track, let's look no further than the previous Trump administration for the roadmap.

President Trump unleashed American energy production, rolling back burdensome permitting rules and red-tape. Republicans slashed regulations that canceled pipelines. We erased barriers to our new ones. America sits on the greatest treasure trove of natural resources in the world, and a Republican-led energy policy will not squander that.

West Virginia knows the difference between good and bad energy policy all too well. We are an energy State. We have been blessed with a lot of natural resources, and we know that our economy and people's jobs and people's lives and people's families depend on us unleashing that energy. The jobs that President Trump saved—a lot of those jobs—were West Virginia energy jobs. So we can get back to a cheaper, more secure, and more reliable world by unleashing American energy once again.

The Republican solution is “America First” energy policies that can result

in energy dominance and our own self-reliance—no more depending on fuels from dictators who hate America or no more reliance on green energy from Chinese Communist Party-backed supply chains.

It is going to take an “all of the above” approach, including opening up projects like our recently just opened Mountain Valley Pipeline so that we can deliver energy in markets, promoting carbon capture and sequestration to use our vast coal resources, nuclear energy, and renewables, as the market sees fit—and they are growing.

In a few months, I will be chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. I am really excited about this opportunity, and I cannot stress enough how important these items are to the agenda.

My Senate Republican colleagues and I are prepared to bring forward legislative solutions to help fuel American growth, and I hope our Democratic colleagues will join us in moving these solutions forward in the next Congress.

On the economy, residents from my State—and the entire country—are still reeling from the elevated costs on all things, from housing, energy, food, and almost every other everyday essential.

Personal finances are stretched so thin right now. For instance, in my State of West Virginia, West Virginians are spending, on average, an additional \$930 a month, or more than \$25,000 a year, due to inflation, since 2021. Actually, that is a total of \$25,000 since 2021.

The plan to get the American economy back on track is a tried-and-true formula of energy dominance—repealing burdensome regulations—and lowering taxes. It is pretty simple. You should keep more of your own paycheck, and the government should stay out of the way.

I am looking forward to taking up legislation proposed by me and my other Senate colleagues toward these ends, including an extension and reauthorization of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that we passed in 2017—including some of the most pro-growth tax reform policies that we have seen—as well as other potential budget solutions.

Crime and the border go hand in hand. Under President Trump's first administration, both were managed. But now they are not. Look no further than the example of the addiction crisis, a direct product of lawlessness and the free rein of Mexican cartels.

Just a few days ago, last Friday, I convened State and community leaders in West Virginia for a summit focused on combating the addiction crisis. The correlation between wide-open borders and the raging drug crisis was mentioned repeatedly at this summit, especially during the presentation and discussion with our law enforcement panel.

Here is the fentanyl crisis by the numbers: CBP seized 27,000 pounds of