

Just this morning, we saw a levee breach on the White River, and “Go now” evacuations have been issued for the city of Pacific, in South King County—not when it comes to landslides, which remain a huge risk at this moment, and, certainly, not when it comes to recovery.

Mitigating disaster, responding to disaster—that is crucial, and we have done a good job so far, but our work is not done until we have tackled recovery.

And while we still don’t know the full scope of this destruction, what we do know is that the damage that has already been done is massive. Entire neighborhoods and huge swaths of farmland have been flooded. Some roads have buckled. Some are covered in debris. Some were just simply swept away. Businessowners are returning to flooded shops and ruined inventory. There are families coming home only to find their house is gone. We have downed trees. We have downed powerlines, damaged wastewater facilities, and breached levees. And, again, there will be more destructive flooding to come.

The painful truth is we have a lot of broken pieces floating across Washington State right now, and it will be a slow, hard process to put this all back together again and help people get their lives back on track.

So here is my message to everyone back in Washington State who is dealing with the tremendous aftermath of these devastating floods: I know you have a long road ahead, but I promise you will not walk that road alone. I will be with you every step of the way. I will be your voice here in Washington, DC, and I will fight tooth and nail to make sure you get the support you need to build and to recover.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF THOMAS ALBUS

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Tom Albus to be the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri. He is part of the forthcoming nominations package that this body will be voting on later this week.

His nomination in particular is special to me. He not only is eastern Missouri—the eastern district of Missouri, my lifelong home—but when I was attorney general of Missouri, Tom was my first assistant, the chief deputy when I first came into office.

He is a proud alum of Georgetown, Mizzou Law, and St. Louis University High School.

Tom is one of the finest prosecutors I have met in my whole life. For 17

years, Tom served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Missouri, where he won numerous special achievement awards and recognition for his outstanding service.

Tom served as my first assistant attorney general in Missouri and then as a circuit judge in Missouri’s 21st Judicial Circuit, which is in St. Louis County.

In his distinguished legal career, Tom has appeared in nearly 900 Federal criminal prosecutions and civil matters. He has tried 15 cases to verdict and presided over dozens more as a judge.

But Tom shines just as bright outside of the courtroom. He is as committed to St. Louis as anyone I have ever met. As a lifetime leader at the Missouri Athletic Club, in our local parish—the Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church—with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, and as the mock trial coach for St. Louis University High School and now St. Joseph’s Academy, Tom has a pure and genuine heart. That is what he cares about—service.

Tom is sharp, serious, and a lifelong proponent of law and order. He is a career law man.

As interim U.S. attorney, Tom is already delivering results, going after violent crime and its root causes with everything he has got. Just in the last few weeks under his watch, he has indicted a former high school baseball coach on drug trafficking charges. He has sentenced child sex traffickers to serious, long prison terms. He has taken down illegal immigrants tied to a nationwide organized retail crime ring. That is leadership. That is Tom Albus.

He has trained for this job that we are set to vote on here his entire career. I have the utmost confidence in his abilities. He is going to do a fantastic job as the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri, and I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I am going to be asking shortly for unanimous consent on three bills.

The first one is my bipartisan Disaster Assistance Simplification Act, which basically makes a commonsense change to create a universal application for disaster survivors to more easily navigate the available Federal assistance after they have been hit by a natural disaster.

Currently, disaster survivors must complete separate and detailed applications, often with duplicative questions, which can take weeks and sometimes months to complete—something folks who are suffering from a natural disaster simply don’t have the time for, and certainly they need immediate

help. The separate processes can be overwhelming to disaster survivors who are just trying to piece their lives back together, causing many to give up on seeking the help they certainly are qualified for.

My bill would simply ask Federal Agencies to design one combined application and work together to share information amongst themselves, with the necessary data-sharing protections in place, to make the obstacles to overcoming a disaster a bit less onerous for folks who are suffering.

I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this bill, which passed through the Senate unanimously in the last Congress. I believe we must make this simple change so that when disaster strikes, disaster survivors can more easily access the assistance they certainly deserve.

The second bill is my bipartisan U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer Retirement Technical Corrections Act, which ensures that a number of DHS law enforcement officers will receive the retirement benefits that they were promised—that they were promised—when starting their service almost 20 years ago.

In 2008, CBP incorrectly informed a group of newly hired officers that they would be eligible for an enhanced retirement benefit without having to hit a certain retirement age or reach 20 years of service to qualify. CBP realized this mistake a decade later—a full 10 years later—and in 2021, that group of officers abruptly lost access to the retirement package they were promised when they were hired.

This bill directs CBP, along with the Office of Personnel Management, to provide those affected officers the benefits they were promised when they accepted those positions.

None of us would stand for the government telling us after almost 20 years of service that we were not going to receive the benefits we were promised when we began those positions. We shouldn’t expect these law enforcement officers to do so either.

This bill is necessary to fix an Agency error that upended the retirement plans of 1,400 officers, including 70 officers who live in my State of Michigan.

Last Congress, the Senate unanimously passed this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill once again.

The final bill, the third bill, is my bipartisan, commonsense bill, Helping Eliminate Limitations for Prompt Response and Recovery Act, and is going to repeal section 695 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, which limits the length of certain contracts in the aftermath of a disaster.

This bill aligns the Department of Homeland Security with more recent governmentwide rules. Matching DHS with governmentwide requirements will alleviate confusion and streamline the response to and recovery from disasters.

This is a straightforward, good-governance step that will benefit disaster survivors; therefore, I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this bill, which the Senate previously passed by unanimous consent in the 118th Congress.

Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 252, S. 594; Calendar No. 253, S. 727; and Calendar No. 264, S. 861.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I further ask that the bills be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, all en bloc.

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

The bill was passed, as follows:

DISASTER ASSISTANCE SIMPLIFICATION ACT

The bill (S. 861) to streamline the sharing of information among Federal disaster assistance agencies, to expedite the delivery of life-saving assistance to disaster survivors, to speed the recovery of communities from disasters, to protect the security and privacy of information provided by disaster survivors, and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for the third reading, was read the third time and passed as follows:

S. 861

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Disaster Assistance Simplification Act”.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED DISASTER ASSISTANCE INTAKE PROCESS AND SYSTEM.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 707. ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED DISASTER ASSISTANCE INTAKE PROCESS AND SYSTEM.

“(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Administrator’ means the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“(2) APPLICANT.—The term ‘applicant’ means—

“(A) an individual, business, or organization that applies for disaster assistance from a disaster assistance program;

“(B) an individual, business, or organization on behalf of which an individual described in subparagraph (A) applies for disaster assistance from a disaster assistance program; and

“(C) an individual, business, or organization that seeks assistance as a beneficiary of a State, local government, or Indian tribal government that received assistance under a disaster assistance program.

“(3) DISASTER ASSISTANCE AGENCY.—The term ‘disaster assistance agency’ means—

“(A) the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

“(B) any Federal agency that provides disaster assistance to individuals, businesses, organizations, States, local governments, Indian tribal governments, communities, or organizations that the Administrator certifies as a disaster assistance agency in accordance with subsection (f) to carry out the purposes of a disaster assistance program.

“(4) DISASTER ASSISTANCE INFORMATION.—The term ‘disaster assistance information’ includes any personal, biographical, demographic, geographical, financial, application decision, or other information that a disaster assistance agency, or a recipient of a Federal block grant from a disaster assistance agency, is authorized to collect, maintain, disclose, or use to—

“(A) process an application for disaster assistance from a disaster assistance program; or

“(B) otherwise carry out the purpose of a disaster assistance program.

“(5) DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—The term ‘disaster assistance program’ means—

“(A) a program that provides disaster assistance to individuals and households under title IV or V in accordance with sections 408 and 502; or

“(B) any other assistance program authorized by a Federal statute or funded with Federal appropriations under which a disaster assistance agency awards or distributes disaster assistance to an individual, household, or organization, or provides a Federal block grant for these purposes, that arises from a major disaster or emergency declared under section 401 or 501, respectively, including—

“(i) disaster assistance;

“(ii) long-term disaster recovery assistance;

“(iii) the post-disaster restoration of infrastructure and housing;

“(iv) post-disaster economic revitalization;

“(v) a loan authorized under section 7(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)); and

“(vi) food benefit allotments under section 412 of this Act and section 5(h) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2014(h)).

“(6) RECORD.—The term ‘record’ has the meaning given the term in section 552a of title 5, United States Code.

“(b) UNIFIED DISASTER ASSISTANCE INTAKE PROCESS AND SYSTEM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days after the date of enactment of the Disaster Assistance Simplification Act, the Administrator shall, in consultation with appropriate Federal, State, local, and Indian tribal governments and entities, develop and establish a unified intake process and system for applicants for disaster assistance provided by a disaster assistance agency to—

“(A) facilitate a consolidated application for any form of disaster assistance provided by a disaster assistance agency when appropriate to support the nature and purposes of the assistance;

“(B) carry out the purposes of disaster assistance programs swiftly, efficiently, fairly, and in accordance with applicable laws and privacy and data protections; and

“(C) support the detection, prevention, and investigation of waste, fraud, abuse, or discrimination in the administration of disaster assistance programs.

“(2) CAPABILITIES OF THE CONSOLIDATED APPLICATION SYSTEM.—The unified intake process and system established under paragraph (1) shall—

“(A) accept applications for disaster assistance programs;

“(B) allow for applicants to receive status updates on applications for disaster assistance programs;

“(C) allow for applicants to update disaster assistance information throughout the recovery journeys of those applicants;

“(D) allow for the distribution of information on additional recovery resources to disaster survivors that may be available in a disaster-stricken jurisdiction, in coordination with appropriate Federal, State, local, and Tribal partners;

“(E) provide disaster survivors with information and documentation on the applications of those disaster survivors for a disaster assistance program;

“(F) allow for the distribution of application data to support faster and more effective distribution of Federal disaster assistance, including block grant assistance, for disaster recovery;

“(G) allow for disaster assistance agencies to communicate directly with disaster survivors; and

“(H) contain other capabilities determined necessary by the heads of disaster assistance agencies.

“(3) UPDATES.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Administrator receives a request from a disaster assistance agency to update questions in the consolidated application described in paragraph (1) needed to administer the disaster assistance programs of the disaster assistance agency, the Administrator shall make those updates.

“(c) AUTHORITIES OF ADMINISTRATOR.—The Administrator may—

“(1) collect, maintain, disclose, and use disaster assistance information, including such information received from any disaster assistance agency, with any other disaster assistance agency for purposes of subsection (b)(1); and

“(2) subject to subsection (d), authorize the collection, maintenance, disclosure, and use of disaster assistance information collected on or after the date of enactment of the Disaster Assistance Simplification Act by publishing a notice on a public website that—

“(A) includes a detailed description of—

“(i) the specific disaster assistance information authorized to be collected, maintained, disclosed, and used;

“(ii) why the collection, maintenance, disclosure, or use of the disaster assistance information is necessary to carry out the purpose of a disaster assistance program;

“(iii) how the collection, maintenance, disclosure, and use of disaster assistance information incorporates fair information practices; and

“(iv) the disaster assistance agencies that will be granted access to the disaster assistance information to carry out the purpose of any disaster assistance program; and

“(B) provides that the submission of an application through a unified disaster application constitutes prior written consent to disclose disaster assistance information to disaster assistance agencies for the purpose of section 552a(b) of title 5, United States Code.

“(d) COLLECTION AND SHARING OF RECORDS AND INFORMATION.—

“(1) EFFECT OF PUBLICATION OF NOTICE ON PUBLIC WEBSITE.—The publication of a notice by the Administrator on a public website of a revision to the system of records of the unified intake process and system established under subsection (b)(1) prior to any new collection, maintenance, disclosure, or use of records to carry out the purposes of a disaster assistance program with respect to a major disaster or emergency declared by the President under section 401 or 501, respectively, of this Act shall be deemed to satisfy the notice and publication requirements of section 552a(e)(4) of title 5, United States Code, for the entire period of performance for any assistance provided under a disaster assistance program.

“(2) PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT WAIVER.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon the declaration of a major disaster or emergency pursuant to section 401 or 501, respectively, of this Act,