

Thank you. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee left a trail of devastation across New York State. I saw firsthand the impact they left on our communities: hundreds of families living in shelters, complete homes destroyed, belongings piled up on people's front yards, small businesses uncertain whether they would even reopen and worrying about whether they could hire back their employees, farms that had no feed for livestock for days, crops and livelihoods vanishing without any trace in a single day, crumbling bridges, washed-out roads, heating oil soaking into buildings and the ground. I was born and raised in upstate New York, and I can say we have never seen this kind of devastation—certainly not in my lifetime.

America has always stood by those who have suffered greatly from disaster and we have always helped them to rebuild. We have an obligation to these families, businesses, and farmers to help them rebuild today.

This picture is of downtown Binghamton. I met with hundreds of families displaced and placed in a Red Cross shelter at the University of Binghamton. They were on day four at the shelter, unclear if they would be able to see what was left of their homes.

I can't fully describe the worry and fear in the eyes of parents who are in a shelter with their children. I talked to one mother who has 10 children, the youngest of whom was 2 years old, trying desperately to keep them fed, keep them safe but literally having no sense of when she could return to her home and what it would look like when she returned.

I talked to one father whose daughter turned 13 years old that day in the shelter and his worry was mostly: I don't know what is in front of us. I don't know when we will be able to go home. I don't know how much has been destroyed, and I don't know how I will rebuild.

One parent I talked to was a young mother. She held a 6-week-old infant in her arms, and she said to me: I have everything I need right here. That exemplified the courage of Americans when they fight through suffering—the strength of New Yorkers that they will pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and make the difference. But we in Washington must help.

In Schoharie County, on the main street of the villages of both Schoharie and Middleburgh, every single home was flooded. The water mark was at

about 7 feet. As you drive down the main street and begin to talk to the business owners and the families, you can see there was not one left untouched. Every piece of these families' belongings is literally on the front lawns of these homes and businesses.

But I watched these business owners begin to rebuild. I could see them literally bringing the mud from the basements, bringing the mud from their ground floors, pulling down all the drywall because obviously the damage was so great it would cause long-lasting damage. People are very worried about how they can make sure their business is safe.

This is just a snapshot right here in this picture of the town of Middleburgh. This is the farming community within Schoharie County. These farmers have lost everything. I can tell you, the water was so strong, the surge was so great, it literally took trees out of the ground, completely uprooted and overturned. The crops that we could see on this farm—they were so covered with silt from the river, we could not even recognize what kind of crops they were. I saw potatoes that had been uprooted from the ground all over the road. That farmer could salvage nothing of their farm.

We had one farmer who came down to meet with me because her cows were stranded. They had 800 cows stuck because the roads had been completely washed out. They had no way to get feed up to those cows. They had no way to deal with manure and dump all the milk that had to be destroyed. They needed a rescue effort. Because of the efforts of our Governor—he reacted quickly—our National Guard got up there, got food and water up to those farmers, they fixed the road, and the feed was delivered. But this is the kind of reaction we need from government. This is why the Federal Government must be there to help and protect these families and businesses.

Our next picture is of Greene County. In Greene County, waters rushed down the main street of Windham—this is a picture of Windham—and destroyed all businesses in its wake. The homes of families were also destroyed. There was absolute destruction throughout Greene County.

I talked to just one business owner, and she had a business for children's clothing, children's needs, children's toys. She had just a couple employees, but she said: I have nothing to rebuild. I have no way that I can rebuild my business. I don't think I could rehire those employees.

So there is the feeling of hopelessness and worry and dread and concern on top of a very tough economy anyway. These are the businesses and families and farmers we need to help because we need them to rebuild. We need them to have the ability to rehire those employees, to produce food for our families, to make sure we have thriving communities once again.

The last picture I wish to show is of Keene, up in the North Country. In

Keene, the river rose 22 feet above the flood stage, washing out roads and bridges, and it left much of the town actually stranded for days. Half the town's firehouse was ripped apart and swept away by the river. Up in the High Peaks, the rain came down so hard it brought huge chunks of the mountainside with it, creating slides that have changed the face of the Adirondacks for generations.

As you can see, this is just four communities. Throughout New York State—the North Country, the Capital Region, the Mohawk Valley, the Hudson Valley, the Southern Tier, and Long Island—no one can question the absolute devastation that these storms have left in our communities. We must stand with them in their greatest time of need.

Federal assistance is essential to help these families, these farmers, these businesses, and communities not only recover but rebuild and be stronger than they were before.

We need immediate funding for FEMA and the USDA disaster assistance to provide relief for these communities all across New York and for all the other States that were affected by these storms.

SYRIA SANCTIONS ACT OF 2011

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I would now like to address a second issue that is causing me very grave concern. I would like to talk for a moment about a piece of legislation I have introduced with Senators KIRK and LIEBERMAN to toughen the sanctions on Syria.

Syrian President Assad has killed over 2,000 of his own people in an alarming torrent of violence from one of the world's most repressive regimes—2,200 people are estimated to have died so far.

Assad's aggression against the Syrian people is matched by his subversive aggression abroad. His regime is a state sponsor of terrorism, one of Iran's closest allies, and a key backer of Hamas and Hezbollah. Assad's regime has for years helped foreign fighters enter Iraq and kill our U.S. soldiers.

In response to this violent crackdown, I introduced the bipartisan Syria Sanctions Act of 2011 to hold Assad's regime accountable. This legislation would block access to the U.S. market for companies that invest in Syria's energy sector, purchase the county's oil, and sell gasoline to Syria. This sanction is critical, since Syria's energy sector accounts for one-third of that state's revenue.

I ask my colleagues to sponsor S. 1472 and send a clear message to Syria that until the Assad regime responds to the democratic urging of its people, halts its nuclear development, and ends support for terrorism, Syria will not and should not have access to the global economy, and any company that does business with Syria will no longer have access to the global economy.

This legislation is very clear and simple: that no company should be allowed to put their profits before our national security.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

APPROVING THE RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of a joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise to speak about the need to have a disaster assistance effort to support those in New York, your State, as well as across the country and the tremendous needs we have as a result of what has happened regarding the weather. This year we have seen a terrible string of natural disasters that have shut down businesses, farms, and left families homeless all across our country. As chair of the Agriculture Committee, I am particularly focused, of course, on what has happened to our farmers in America.

I am concerned about the flooding along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the record droughts that have devastated the livelihoods of men and women who grow our food all across America. Earlier this year we had the worst drought in recorded history in Oklahoma, with about \$1.6 billion in crop losses. In Kansas I have had the opportunity, and my staff has, to join with my ranking member, my colleague, Senator ROBERTS, to talk with folks and a chance to see that the drought had wiped out about \$2 billion in crops.

Floods in the Mississippi River Valley washed over 3 million acres—3 million acres—of farmland. Hurricane Irene destroyed more than 450,000 acres of cotton and 300,000 acres of corn in North Carolina. In New York we have

seen similar damage to corn, soybeans, alfalfa, fruits, and vegetables. In Vermont crop losses are estimated at more than \$5 million.

All across our country we have serious challenges that are creating hardships for our businesses, our farmers, and our families. We need to respond. That is our responsibility. Right now the droughts are worse in Texas where the damage is also in the billions of dollars. We have more than 1,000 homes that have been lost.

Already this year there have been natural disasters in 48 of our States—48 out of 50 States have had natural disasters. Michigan, thank goodness, is one of the two States that has not been affected by the weather. But throughout our Nation's history when men and women in one part of the country were hit with a natural disaster, all of America came together to support them and to help rebuild.

That is what this effort is about, coming together as Americans. That is who we are as Americans. We stand with each other in times of trouble. This is not the time to play politics, not when hundreds of thousands of families, farmers, and businesses have been devastated by an unprecedented string of floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters.

Already, FEMA has had to halt rebuilding efforts in 41 States. So it is critical that we get this done. This legislation in front of us needs to pass, and it needs to pass quickly.

But I also want to tell you about another emergency that has taken place in my State and in too many other States. It is called a jobs emergency. We may not have been affected by the natural disasters of the weather, but as we look over the last decade in a global economy, as the economy has changed we have been through the same kind of devastation—over a longer period of time, but our people are affected as much as any other State disaster.

We have 14 million people out of work in this country—14 million people out of work. We have a huge national deficit. We will never get out of debt with more than 14 million people out of work. We have to make smart decisions on cutting what is not important, and we have to grow. We have to create jobs for people and support the efforts of the private sector to create jobs.

For each and every one of those families, their job search is an emergency. It is an emergency every time they think about how to put food on their table. It is an emergency every month when they have to scrape together money for the rent or the mortgage. It is an emergency every minute of every day when those men and women are filling out applications, going to job fairs, trying their best to get back to work.

So I find in the middle of all of this, in the middle of support for all that is going on around the country in terms of natural disasters, it is extremely concerning—and in fact outrageous to

me—that the House Republicans have proposed a job-killing offset to pay for the help that is critically needed for natural disasters; that would pull the rug out from under businesses and families all across our country and put up to 50,000 American jobs at risk. That is what they are proposing.

I absolutely oppose this. They propose paying for this critical disaster bill by taking dollars out of a very successful advanced manufacturing retooling program that we passed in the 2007 Energy bill—and it took a while to get it up and going. The previous administration never administered it. I thank the Obama administration for coming in in 2009 and beginning the process of putting it together and all of the rules it took, and so on. So it took a while to get up and going. It has not moved as fast as I would like at all. But, thank goodness, the Obama administration saw it as a priority and has moved forward to put it in place.

So what has happened already? Well, these retooling loans have meant 41,000 jobs in Tennessee, California, Indiana, Michigan, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri. These retooling loans have helped companies retool older manufacturing plants to build the products of the future in America rather than shipping those jobs overseas. It has been extremely successful.

In Michigan retooling loans made it possible for Ford Motor Company to save 1,900 jobs at the Michigan assembly plant in the city of Wayne so they could build the all new Ford Focus and the battery-electric Focus in America. In the process of that, as we partnered with them on battery funding as well—in the process of that, with the help of these retooling loans they are bringing jobs back from Mexico to support the work they are doing on the new vehicles.

I do not know how many economic development efforts we can stand on the Senate floor today and talk about in the Senate or House that are actually bringing jobs back from overseas. This is the program that the House Republicans want to cut. This loan—and it is a loan, so it has to be repaid—is allowing them to be able to have lower costs to be able to do the retooling on those older plants, to be able to make these new high-tech vehicles.

As I said, in the case of the Ford Motor Company, they have saved 1,900 jobs and are bringing jobs back from Mexico. Another Michigan company, Severstal North America, was able to secure a retooling loan to retool an old steel mill, the Rouge steel mill in Michigan, into a cutting-edge plant building advanced, high-strength steel for automotive production.

Jobs here. That does not count what is happening in States across America. That loan, along with private loans and a billion-dollar investment from the company, will help create over 2,500 constructive jobs and will bring the total number of permanent manufacturing jobs at that plant, again, to