

major hurricanes, starting with Fay, came through Florida with drenching rain, rain, rain, and not just in the State of Florida because as that storm moved its way up through the central part of our State, it flooded vast areas of the central part of our country.

Then, as people were drying out and cleaning up from the wreckage of these storms, with levees overflowing, creeks rising, farmers struggling, and communities trying to keep dry, lo and behold, here comes Gustav into the gulf, skipping Florida this time, no direct hit—although you have been hit so many times in the last few years—but slamming right into the coast of Louisiana, as ironic as it would seem, literally almost to the day of the third anniversary of Katrina, which was the worst catastrophe. And we say natural disaster, but actually it was a man-made catastrophe because had the levees that we made held, the city would not have gone underwater, or the region. So it was both a natural and manmade disaster. On the third anniversary, Gustav comes through, with its great tidal surge in south Louisiana. It caught part of Mississippi, as well as a little bit of Texas, but it swept through all 64 parishes in Louisiana with hurricane-force winds.

Now, this is not usual for us. We usually have terrible storms, such as Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, without the levee breaks, where the damage is localized to the southern part of our State. But not Gustav. Gustav came through as a category III and then II, and then the winds moved through our entire State. Louisiana was in that path.

Just as we were catching our breath and the lights were starting to come back on after weeks, Ike comes roaring in—yes, directly into Galveston and into that path of Houston, but, as you know, the eastern bands are the worst, and to the east of Galveston and to the east of Beaumont, lo and behold, lies southwest Louisiana and coastal Louisiana yet again.

I tell my family that I feel as if—not just for me but the people I represent—we are living literally the chapters of Job, I mean for the last several years, just suffering after suffering after suffering.

This Congress has been very good, particularly the leadership now, to step up. Even at times when, in my view, the administration turned a cold shoulder for whatever reason, this Congress stepped up and did yeoman's work, basically pushing forward on 100 percent reimbursement when we needed it and, when there was some reluctance to do so at the administration level, giving us more community development block grants, and I could go on and on. We are very grateful.

But I had to come to the floor today, Mr. President, to speak again on behalf of the 64 parishes in Louisiana and the southern part of our State. Senators, of course, will speak for their own States, but I am well aware, having been in

conversations with Senator HUTCHISON of Texas earlier today and Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN from Arkansas and other Senators, that the southern part of our State, particularly when it comes to our rural areas and to agriculture, is currently being overlooked, and I am here today to call attention to this fact and to try to lay out some data for the record in hopes that sometime before we leave here we might make a few corrections to this situation because it would be tragic and devastating to not just hundreds but thousands of families in these rural areas.

Right now, as I speak, people in these areas are looking out at their fields and seeing complete and total destruction. These storms hit not at planting time, not in the middle of the season, but at harvest time, and because the Fay rains delayed the harvest—and, of course, you know how our crops are harvested, Mr. President. You can't harvest crops in the middle of torrential downpours, so the farmers who were ready waited. We had beautiful crops in the field. We had soybean that looked beautiful. We had cotton. Our sweet potato crop looked promising. We are growing a lot more corn. In Louisiana, we grow it all. We are not a State that grows just one crop. We have vegetables, but primarily it is cotton, soybean, rice, and now our sweet potatoes are growing in many more places, not just south Louisiana. So our farmers were literally giddy with excitement. Only 4 months ago, we were thinking we were going to have a Record, a banner agricultural year.

I am sure people were making plans for expansion and new investments and perhaps even acquiring new land or expanding their lease arrangements. Literally within a matter of 90 days, the world turned upside down. The world seems to be turning upside down right now in another sector, in the financial markets. As that world is turning upside down, this Congress is turning with it and all attention right now is focused on Wall Street and financiers and the lack of credit in New York, on the east coast to the west coast. But I am here to tell you there is a credit crunch, a credit crisis right now in the heartland and nobody is talking much about this.

We have a \$700 billion bailout bill under consideration. I have not heard in the last 2 weeks from anyone—from the Fed to the White House to many of the leadership here in Congress—about any kind of credit crunch happening in small towns, on Main Streets, the heartland, the backbone of this country when it comes to agriculture. I can tell you there is a lot of anxiety and a lot of fear where I come from.

I visited some of my farms last week. I went up to northeast Louisiana to see for myself. I have been getting calls, hearing some dire reports, so I thought I better go look and see myself because I am sure—I don't know, but I would

venture to say there hasn't been anybody from the U.S. Department of Agriculture up there lately. I thought, since I am a Senator from Louisiana, I would go up and look myself.

I am going to put up some pictures here because I was so taken by what I saw that I had my staff blow up some photographs. This is the rice crop in Cheneyville, LA. Of course it is completely ruined. The rice is sprouting in the fields, unable to be harvested. These fields are not able to be drained. That is the rice crop.

I want to show a picture of our cotton crop in north Louisiana. And I have a few other photos to share about sugarcane, sweet potatoes, et cetera. This is our cotton crop right here. Again, literally 8 weeks ago this was the most beautiful cotton you could see, for miles and miles. Louisiana, even though we talk a lot about tourism and we talk a lot about the port and oil and gas, we are by nature a very strong agricultural State. Not every State in the Union is such, but we are. We have thousands of acres under cultivation. This is what our cotton looks like. It cannot be harvested. The farmers who were desperate to try to get in there and harvest what they could have been turned away at the gin because the gin is unable to process this cotton. So we are going to have 100 percent losses on some farms, 50 percent losses, 45 percent losses, at a time when the farmers have put every penny they had into their crop, waiting to pull it out. At that moment the rains came.

When you talk about a credit crunch, I know it may be tight on the east coast and the west coast, but it could hardly get tighter than in small places that I know of in Louisiana. I am sure this is true of Texas and Arkansas.

We are not asking for \$700 billion. We are not even asking for \$50 billion. We are not even necessarily at this moment asking for \$10 billion. But we have to have something before we leave. We have to have something before we leave.

When I saw this, I thought surely the Department of Agriculture is on top of this—because I have one staff person who does agriculture—one. The Department of Agriculture—I don't know, but I am going to put in the RECORD how many employees they might have. I am sure it is thousands. I am going to put into the RECORD the exact number. So I say to myself: Don't worry, Senator, there is a whole Department of Agriculture out there. Surely the people whose job it is to record this would have been down to either Louisiana or Texas or Mississippi or Arkansas to take pictures and maybe help declare a disaster.

On Wednesday I had a hearing and asked the Secretary to come before our committee, to ask him if he has the intention of declaring a disaster in Louisiana. He said he was not sure. When I pressed him for when he might declare a disaster, he did not know. They said they are getting the figures in as we speak.