

this change in our version of the budget resolution. Accordingly, the Armed Services Committee included a provision to eliminate the offset, thanks to our chairman, Senator JOHN WARNER. However, the conference could not find a way to bring this to closure. Our eligible survivors are again let down.

Mr. President, I have felt honored over the years to champion this important change in our survivor benefits system. And, although disappointed, I am no less honored or resolved to continue this fight. I thank my many Senate colleagues who have felt as strongly as I about taking care of our military widows and orphans. I look forward to working with them again when we bring this to the Senate again in our next session. Our military men and women, and their survivors would never give up; neither will we.

GLOBAL WARMING REDUCTION ACT OF 2006

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today as the lead cosponsor for the Kerry-Snowe Global Warming Reduction Act of 2006. Six years into the 21st century, global warming should be on a trajectory toward solutions . . . international and domestic policies confronting climate change should already be in place. We believe that our bill will ultimately lead to decisive action to minimize the many dangers posed by global warming by calling for an 85 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050. Thankfully, Senator KERRY and I are not working in a policy vacuum as the United States is a party to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which has the objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent “dangerous anthropogenic interference” with the climate system.

The risks associated with a temperature increase above two degrees centigrade are grave, including the disintegration of the Greenland ice sheet, which, if it were to melt completely, would raise global average sea level by approximately 23 feet, devastating many of the world’s coastal areas and population centers. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that temperatures will rise between 1.4 to 5.8 degrees centigrade, or 2.5 to 10.4 degrees fahrenheit, by the end of the century, under a range of expected emissions trends.

The Kerry-Snowe bill will map out the way to stabilization through a cap and trade system for major sectors of our society and establish the climate reinvestment fund consisting of amounts collected from carbon auctions of allowances and civil penalties. The fund will be used for investment in clean energy research and technology. The bill also provides for a research and development program on global climate change and abrupt climate change research. We also call for a re-

newable portfolio standard requiring 20 percent of electricity from renewable electricity by 2020, and an updated Renewable Fuel Standard and E85 infrastructure requirements of 10 percent by 2020.

The act also contains vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards for cars and light-duty vehicles as well as medium and heavy-duty vehicles. Importantly, our bill includes a resolution expressing the urgent need for the administration to reengage in international climate negotiations.

I do not come lightly nor lately to the climate change issue. That is why, this past year, when asked by three major independent think tanks—the Center for American Progress in the United States, the Institute for Public Policy Research in the U.K. and the Australia Institute—I accepted the co-chairmanship of the high level International Climate Change Taskforce—the ICCT—to chart a way forward on climate change on a parallel track with the Kyoto Protocol process. This led me to meetings both in Washington and London with my Cochair, the Rt. Honorable Stephen Byers of the U.K. for the international, cross-party, cross-sector collaboration of leaders from public service, science, business, and civil society from both developed and developing countries.

We set out a pathway to solve climate change issues in tandem collaboratively finding common ground through recommendations that are both ambitious and realistic to engage all countries, and, critically, including those not bound by the Kyoto Protocol and major developing countries. Our ICCT report, “Meeting the Climate Challenge,” recommends ways to involve the world’s largest economies in the effort, including the U.S. and major developing nations, focusing on creating new agreements to achieve the deployment of clean energy technologies and a new global policy framework that is both inclusive and fair. Like the Kerry-Snowe legislation, the ICCT Report calls for the establishment of a long-term objective of preventing global average temperature from rising more than 2 degrees centigrade.

The taskforce arrived at the 2 degrees centigrade temperature increase goal on the basis of an extensive review of the relevant scientific literature that shows that, as the ICCT Report states:

Beyond the 2 degrees centigrade level, the risks to human societies and ecosystems grow significantly. It is likely, for example, that average temperature increases larger than this will entail substantial agricultural losses, will greatly increase the numbers of people at risk of water shortages, and widespread adverse health impacts.

Our ICCT Report goes on to say that:

Climate science is not yet able to specify the trajectory of atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases that corresponds precisely to any particular global temperature rise. Based on current knowledge, however, it appears that achieving a high probability

of limiting global average temperature rise to 2 degrees centigrade will require that the increase in greenhouse-gas concentrations as well as all the other warming and cooling influences on global climate in the year 2100, as compared with 1750, should add up to a net warming no greater than what would be associated with a CO₂ concentration of about 400 parts per million (ppm).

The Kerry-Snowe bill reverses the growth of greenhouse gas emissions starting in 2010 and then progresses to more rapid reductions over time, out to 2050, meant to protect against a temperature rise above 2 degrees centigrade, which is predicted to mean that global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide will not exceed 450 parts per million. The bill gets the US on the right track, but at the same time avoiding any negative impact on our economy.

Achieving success for our policy imperatives means disabusing skeptics and opponents alike of cherished mythologies that environmental protection and economic growth are mutually exclusive. The irony is both are actually increasingly interdependent and will only become more so as the 21st century progresses. Robust companies dedicated to reducing emissions are proof-positive “going-green” represents a burgeoning sector of our economy, not the drain and hindrance we’ve been led to believe for so many years.

And to their credit the most progressive U.S. companies have reduced emissions even further than required in climate bills offered in the Congress to date. In an act of economic acumen, they are hedging their bets by adopting internal targets—and, these companies are saving money by reducing their energy consumption and positioning themselves to compete in the growing global market for climate-friendly technologies. Any cost-conscious CFO or forward-thinking CEO for that matter should admit that to prevent pollution now will most certainly cost less than cleaning it up later.

And the economics of prevention and stewardship resonate more when you consider property that erodes because of rising sea levels, farm land that fails to yield crops and becomes barren and arid, and revenue opportunities squandered because of dwindling fishing stocks caused by hotter temperatures. These represent real costs to the bottom line not to mention irreparable damage to our health and quality of life.

Mr. President, temperatures are rising to levels the earth has not experienced for more than a thousand years. The snows of Kilimanjaro are melting so fast that they may completely vanish in 15 years. Alaska’s average temperature has increased nearly five and a half degrees over the past 30 years and explains melting permafrost, sagging roads, and dying forests. A Peruvian glacier in the Andes Mountain, as reported by The Washington Post, is receding at a rate of 360 yards per year, up from a recession rate of just four

yards per year for most of the 1960s and 70s. There is the massive decline in coral reefs critical to sea life worldwide. And in my state of Maine, softwood trees—the heart of our paper-making industry—and sugar maple trees that spur a large tourist industry are in danger of moving northward over the next 50 years, along with our annual potato crop worth approximately \$110 million.

We obviously do not have time in this Congress to debate the Kerry-Snowe bill, but we plan to use our bill as a marker to start the debate in the 110th Congress. The United States Congress is fully capable of enacting policies that change our climate for the better and guarantee a better quality of life for the generations to follow.

EXTENSION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to pass H.R. 6138, which would provide for a temporary extension of the Higher Education Act of 1965 by extending its provisions through June 30, 2007.

This extension, unfortunately, is the sixth time the Higher Education Act has temporarily been extended. It is now critical to move forward with the Higher Education Act and reauthorize the remaining discretionary programs. As my colleagues know, the mandatory portions of the higher education law were reauthorized in February under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2006.

We have the bill out of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, but haven't had the floor time to debate it. I am making the Higher Education Act a top priority for 2007 because postsecondary education is the key to the future successes of our students, our communities, and the economy.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE REFORMS

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, like many in Congress, I am disappointed that we are adjourning Congress for the October recess without enacting comprehensive U.S. Small Business Administration disaster assistance reforms. As our small businesses impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year can attest, this is an agency that is in woeful need of substantive reforms to its Disaster Assistance Program. Our businesses had to wait 4 to 6 months for SBA disaster loans to be approved, and some are still waiting to this day, for loan amounts to be disbursed.

For my part, I have worked for the past year to enact substantive SBA disaster reforms to ensure that 'lessons learned' from Katrina and Rita were incorporated and that businesses nationwide could count on a better prepared and more efficient SBA should a disaster strike their community. Under the leadership of the chair and ranking member of the Senate Small Business Committee, Senators OLYMPIA SNOWE and JOHN KERRY, we sent to the Senate

floor bipartisan legislation, S. 3778, which along with reauthorizing SBA programs, also enacts comprehensive SBA disaster reforms. Instead of working with us to take up and pass this important bill, the administration has frustrated this bill's passage at every turn and will not allow it to the Senate floor for consideration—almost 9 weeks after it was introduced. I am concerned about this lack of urgency from the SBA and the administration so just this week, I sent a letter to the new SBA Administrator Steve Preston. In this letter, I requested his cooperation with our committee to pass this important legislation before Congress adjourns at the end of the year.

I will ask that a copy of this September 27, 2006, letter be printed in the RECORD.

As we adjourn tonight, I note that we are set to pass legislation which temporarily extends programs under the Small Business Act until February 2, 2007. Although I do believe it is essential to extend these SBA programs, I worked with my colleague Senator KERRY to revise this date to November 17, 2006. This November date would have ensured that the Congress would have to return in November and at least attempt to pass SBA Disaster reforms. Instead, with these programs authorized through February 2, 2007, the Congress will adjourn in September 2006 and not take up SBA reauthorization until at least February 2007. I am disappointed by this development because, as elected officials, I believe it sends the wrong signal to our small business community.

If the Congress, in partnership with the SBA, does not address these systemic problems now, I am afraid that it will continue to plague the SBA's disaster response for future disasters. I believe there is a general consensus that these reforms need to get done. Therefore, I will continue my work with my colleagues from sides of the aisle to make these essential improvements this year.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 27, 2006.

HON. STEVEN C. PRESTON,
Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration, Washington, DC.

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR PRESTON: Let me take this opportunity to again congratulate you on your confirmation as Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Your management experience and passion to serve will prove extremely helpful to you in this challenging position.

I write you today because, as a member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, as well as senator from a state hit hard by both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I believe it is my duty to ensure that we implement substantive changes to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program during this session of Congress.

The SBA's response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was too slow and lacking in urgency-threatening the very survival of our affected businesses. A year has passed since

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, yet while Congress is currently acting on extensive reforms for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), there has been only incremental changes to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program. That is why I am pleased to learn that you have recently created the Accelerated Disaster Response Initiative to identify and help implement process improvements to enable the SBA to respond more quickly in assisting businesses and homeowners in need of assistance after a disaster. I applaud these efforts and your leadership on this issue. But much more must be done to address the systemic problems that led to delays and inaction post-Katrina and Rita.

For our part, the Senate is also attempting to address the multiple problems that hampered SBA's ability to assist impacted Gulf Coast small businesses and homeowners. Under the leadership of the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Senators Snowe and Kerry, the committee voted unanimously to approve S. 3778, the "Small Business Reauthorization and Improvements Act of 2006" and sent it to the full Senate for consideration. A copy of the bill is attached for your convenience. This bipartisan legislation re-authorizes SBA programs, and also of great importance to me and my constituents, makes essential reforms to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program. However, since S. 3778 was introduced on August 2, 2006, almost nine weeks ago, it has been blocked from consideration and the Committee is still waiting for budget information so that it may file its report on the bill. It is my understanding that the administration and SBA has several concerns about this bill in its current form.

I am very concerned at this apparent deadlock, a deadlock which threatens our bipartisan efforts to implement comprehensive SBA Disaster Assistance reforms before the end of the year. In particular, I believe that there must be SBA reforms in the following areas:

Short-Term Assistance: Following Katrina and Rita small businesses waited, on average, four to six months for approvals and disbursements on SBA Disaster Loans. In order to ensure the long-term survival of small businesses impacted by a catastrophic disaster, SBA needs to be in the business of short-term recovery-by providing either emergency bridge loans or grants.

Disaster Loan Process for Homeowners: While SBA's mission is to "aid, counsel, assist and protect, insofar as is possible, the interests of small business concerns" it also has the added responsibility of helping affected homeowners rebuild their housing post-disaster. Katrina and Rita resulted in record numbers of SBA Disaster Loan applications from homeowners, which strained SBA's existing resources and personnel. If the SBA must bear this responsibility, the agency should improve the process as well as possibly seek greater coordination and cooperation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on disaster housing assistance.

Expedited Disaster Loans to Businesses: The SBA currently has no mechanism in place to expedite Disaster Loans to impacted businesses that are either a major source of employment or that can demonstrate a vital contribution to recovery efforts in the area, such as businesses who construct housing, provide building materials, or conduct debris removal. The SBA need the ability to fast-track loans to these businesses, in order to jumpstart local economies and recovery efforts.