

extenders bill. Republicans support the provisions being extended in this legislation. That is why I, along with several of my colleagues, introduced an even stronger version of the House bill, one that contains even longer extensions of the expired provisions, provides AMT relief excluded from the House bill, and does both in a form that would avoid a veto; that is, of course, without raising taxes.

The tax provisions in question are an enormous help to millions of Americans, and a long-term extension would provide the added comfort of predictability into the family budget and the small business balance sheet in the midst of a difficult economic time.

Republicans have been firm on this point, which is why I read with some amusement a letter which was sent to me on Friday by my friend the majority leader, extolling the virtues of the House bill. As I said, Republicans truly agree that the expired provisions certainly merit extension. This is not a State secret. Our point of departure, the principle we have insisted on, is this: Short-term tax extensions should not be the occasion for permanent tax increases. If a new tax policy is being created, that is one thing. But if current taxes are simply being extended, those extensions should not be accompanied by new tax increases. To do so would be to transform the annual ritual of extending current tax law into a stealth exercise in increasing the size of Government.

Unfortunately, the House Democratic leadership seems to have dug in, saying it will not pass an extenders bill without tax hikes. This brings us to an impasse for no good reason. First of all, it strikes me as odd that the House Democratic leadership would single out these particular tax extenders for a fight on offsets. They didn't need offsets on the stimulus bill earlier this year. AMT relief will apparently not require offsets this year. House leaders have signaled that a new GI benefits expansion would not require offsets. And just last week, the House passed an unemployment insurance expansion bill that did not have offsets.

It is entirely possible that the Democratic leadership is open to compromise. Recall that during last year's AMT debate, House leaders also insisted on offsets. On December 18, just last year, House Democrats were saying they would not consider AMT relief unless it included tax hikes elsewhere. Then the following day, September 19, they passed an AMT bill without tax hikes by a vote of 352 to 64. After all the press releases and letters had been issued, our friends on the other side sat down with Republicans and did something we should do a lot more of around here: they negotiated.

So notwithstanding the letter I received on Friday from my good friend, the majority leader, I am hopeful we can do the same thing on this tax extenders bill—sit down together and come up with a solution that is accept-

able to both sides and which actually has a chance of being signed into law. I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when I finish my remarks Senator HARKIN and Senator GRASSLEY follow me.

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

#### MIDWEST FLOODING

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to offer my thoughts and prayers to the people and communities throughout the Midwest who were hurt by last week's massive floods.

It appears that the floodwaters have begun to recede. But the long, hard process of cleaning up and rebuilding lies ahead.

In particular, I offer sympathy and support to my colleagues TOM HARKIN and CHARLES GRASSLEY, the Senators from Iowa, whose governor has declared 83 of the State's 99 counties to be disaster areas.

Worst hit was the city of Cedar Rapids, IA.

Over 9 square miles—or 1,300 blocks—were flooded in the city and 25,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes. Preliminary estimates indicate over \$700 million in damage. This is in Cedar Rapids alone.

In Cedar Rapids, it is being called not the flood of the century—but the flood of the half-millennium—an event that should occur only once in 500 years.

In fact, rescue workers from Minnesota have been deployed to Iowa to help the victims of the flooding there.

While the residents and businesses of Cedar Rapids were hit the hardest, they were hardly alone. Heavy rainfall last week submerged much of the Midwest—Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and my own State of Minnesota.

Throughout the Midwest, corn and soybean fields turned into lakes. City streets turned into canals. It's like Waterworld. There is water nearly everywhere. And where there isn't water, there is mud. Lots of mud.

In terms of physical devastation, some are calling these floods "the Katrina of the Midwest."

Among the areas suffering flood damage was the southeastern corner of my state of Minnesota. Three major rivers in the area—the Root, the Cedar and the Zumbro—all flooded.

Four Minnesota counties were declared State disaster areas—Freeborn, Mower, Fillmore and Houston counties.

This includes areas that have already suffered extensive flood damage in the past year—both with the devastating floods in August last year as well as floods earlier this spring.

As you can see from this aerial photograph of Austin, MN, taken last week, flood, water poured across big sections of the city, flooding not just streets, but highways and freeway ramps.

This weekend, I spoke with the mayors of Austin, Rochester and Lanesboro. Later in the week, I plan to visit the area and meet with local leaders and residents. After the floods last August, I traveled to the area several times to survey the damage and work with local and State leaders to obtain Federal aid and assistance. My family and I even spent a weekend in the area.

I know these communities are strong—just as you will see with the State of Iowa, which State has been hit even harder, and they will make it through this latest disaster.

Last week's flooding resulted in the death of one Minnesota man, Dale Wangen, of rural Albert Lea. He was driving home in the dark, rainy night and suddenly his car plunged into the rushing flood waters because the road was washed away.

Emergency responders found him only because another car came along and also plunged into the water. That driver was able to get out. But he told rescuers that his car had crashed on top of another car.

Austin, MN, is home to Hormel Foods, a Fortune 500 company. They had to close their corporate offices because of the flood.

Here is a second photograph of Austin, also taken last week. You can see that it was not just a few wet basements. Some neighborhoods were flooded practically up to the treetops and had to be evacuated.

Fortunately, Austin was spared even worse damage because—ever since a major flood 30 years ago—they have been implementing a comprehensive flood mitigation plan, including the purchase of more than 250 homes in flood-prone areas.

Nonetheless, the three worst floods in Austin's history have all occurred since the year 2000—with the worst in 2004.

As one resident of Austin put it: "It seems like we're getting a 'hundred-year flood' every 3 or 4 years."

While the most attention is given to cities and towns damaged by the floods, the countryside has not been spared, either.

Houston County, at the far southeastern tip of Minnesota, is a rural area with a total population of just