

# ROGER WICKER

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U.S. SENATOR  for MISSISSIPPI

## Senate Floor Remarks on Winter Storm Fern February 4, 2026

Mr. President, in a moment, my friend and fellow Senator, Cindy Hyde-Smith, will join me to highlight the devastation done by Winter Storm Fern, along with the resilience of our community and the citizens and leadership there.

Fern covered much of Mississippi with freezing rain, and then a week of low temperatures locked in the blanket of ice. Nearly 200,000 homes lost power. Road travel became almost impossible. Temperatures are rising a bit now, but tragically, there's still very much devastation. And, at this point, 26 Mississippians have lost their lives because of this winter storm. And that number, unfortunately, is rising every day.

I do want to commend, as Senator Hyde-Smith will, the communities, the churches, the schools, the businesses, donation centers, neighbors using Facebook to coordinate food distribution and boost morale, and the crews from Mississippi and from all around the country coming to help. At this point, 80 percent of affected homes now have their power restored.

I commend local leaders, mayors, commissioners, the response team from FEMA, many of whom we know personally, and we're thankful for what they've done and for their resilience. I've said this in past years: In Mississippi, our federal delegation is in this for the long haul, just like we were with the tornadoes that occurred earlier, and we're grateful to the president and for our friends at FEMA for helping us recover.

Now, if I might, before I yield to my dear friend, I want to point out an article that was published by Garden & Gun some two days ago by Beth Ann Fennelly of

Oxford, Mississippi. Beth Ann Fennelly for five years was our state's Poet Laureate.

And she published this article in Garden & Gun which says, "A Beloved Oak Fell, and Oxford Rose." She could just as easily have said "And the entire state of Mississippi rose." But she talks about the experience that her family encountered, and you can multiply that times all of the households.

She says, "It was 3 a.m., and my husband and I and the youngest of our three children—the only one still living at home—huddled in the dark living room, jumping out of our skins with each new explosion, each crack of gunfire. Except it wasn't explosives or gunpowder. It was our trees blowing their heads off and smashing to earth or thudding to our roof."

She points out that we had learned during a severe ice storm some decades ago that water freezing in trees expands them so rapidly they explode from the pressure, taking power lines with them. Some folks lose power for weeks. It's the sound of gunfire.

[This is a] very good article, very well written by someone who would be Poet Laureate. And she ends bemoaning the tree but observing and celebrating the spirit of Mississippi.

And she says, "The ice will melt and the people of Mississippi will roll up their sleeves and crank their chainsaws. The logs will be cleared, but an uncanny new light will compress the violently lopped canopies. On our corner, the picnic blanket of shade our oak had tossed down will go unfurled. The bewildered birds' questions will go unanswered. The squirrels will take new routes to work. The anthem of November will be forever altered without the North Wind's scattershot of acorns on the roof."

Then she ends by asking, "Do trees have souls?" "Maybe it's an unanswerable question," she says, "or maybe the answer's never been more obvious."

I ask unanimous consent, Mr. President, that this article by Beth Ann Fennelly be included in the record after my remarks.

Thank you, and I yield the floor."