even knew. And I again just wanted to join with all of my colleagues and honor this man’s life.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments, and let me say this. As we discuss Chief Justice Rehnquist and what he accomplished and the legacy he brings to the United States of America, we are doing this on the very eve of the beginning of the new selection of a Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. It is, I think, appropriate to re- alize that Chief Justice Rehnquist, having served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for 33 years on the highest court in this land, he also was writing history books to record history.

He knew just what my colleague said, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), that it is important that we remember the history as it was, not re- write it to make it what we want it to be. So he wrote three history books about the Court so we could say, Well, what does history tell us about that event at that time? And so the judge, the great researcher, has given us the research and a direction on the history as it pertains to the Court, something the other justices of the Court that will follow can turn to as additional in- formations to get a picture of where the Court was coming from as it made rulings.

It is very important, and I hope our colleagues in the Senate, as they look at the confirmation of Judge Roberts, I hope they are looking at the his- tory of the United States Supreme Court and the legacy of William Rehnquist.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, there is a point that comes to mind, and I can get it quickly made. This right to privacy that was in the emanations of the penumbras, in the shadows, was some- thing that was in the emanation of that Chief Justice Rehnquist. That right to privacy that was in the emanation’s penumbras, in the shadows, was something that was never recognized by Chief Justice Rehnquist. That right to privacy will be presented to Judge Rob- erts, as asked. In fact, we will be demanded to recognize that right to privacy as a condition of his confirmation over in the Senate, a very right to privacy that Chief Justice Rehnquist never recognized.

That is how they are going to try to amend the Constitution and the con- firmation process over in the Senate. I think it is important to recognize that the legacy of Justice Rehnquist should be preserved in the confirmation process in the Senate as well.

Mr. CARTER. I wonder how you can be unqualified to serve by not recog- nizing that right, when there are mem- bers sitting on the Court at this time who do not recognize that right.

The point is a Supreme Court is that there are multiple points of view, and you should not be requiring only one point of view on the United States Sup- preme Court. To make a confirmation hearing dependent upon one point of view absolutely flies in the face of jus- tice in America.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I appre- ciated hearing from my colleague from Iowa regarding his saying in elemen- tary school that he wanted to change the government. I think about the ex- ample of the emperor who had no clothes, yet all the crowd got swept up in seeing clothes that were not there and saying, Oh, are the clothes not beautiful? There were not the Chief Justice Rehnquist was one of those if he had to stand alone and say they are not there, there are no clothes, did it.

Just in conclusion, I think about the end of Frost’s poem. Two roads diverged in the woods for Chief Justice Rehnquist many years ago, and he took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference. It has, in fact, changed a Nation for the good.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaim- ing my time, I thank the gentleman. One of the downsides of appearing in the Congress with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and the gen- tleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) and the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is these guys are great in quoting all these things out of their head, and that is hard for an old trial judge who is just used to shooting from the hip. I do enjoy the wonderful quotes these guys pull out and quote them right. It is a blessing to have them as Members of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, you have been very patient today as we honor our passing Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, as we laid him to rest today. We thank you for your patience in allowing us to express our opinions about him.

ISSUES AFFECTING AMERICA IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUIH OF NEW YORK). Under the Speak- er’s announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes. The SPEAKER pro tempore.

Mr. MEEK. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House once again. I am glad that we are here back in the people’s capital of the United States to represent those that sent us up here to represent them.

This hour is designated by the Demo- cratic Leader, the gentleman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and the rest of our leadership on the Democratic side, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), also the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), and the gen- tleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLY- BURN), our vice chair of our caucus; and week after week we come to the floor to share with Americans issues that are facing not only them, but also this country.

I can tell you that we appreciate the fact that the leader had enough fore- sight and insight to know that not only those of us that are in the 30-some- thing Working Group, but young Amer- icans, have to have a voice in this proc- ess.

As you all know, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and a number of other issues that have faced the Nation since we recessed for the summer to go back to our districts to also take care of other congressional business, there is a lot that has happened for and to Americans. I think it is important for us to just reflect a little bit on what has happened as it relates to Hurricane Katrina.

Tonight I am joined not only by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), but also the gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), who is my colleague from Florida and representing south Florida. The gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and I, both our districts were touched by Hurricane Katrina as a Category 1 storm, but not as a Category 5, some may say 4, that hit the gulf coast area; and our hearts go out to those individ- uals that are going through the proc- ess.

I think tonight not only are we going to talk about the issues that are facing many of these families, but many of them are young families, many of them are elderly, and because of the mis- takes and the failures in some part of our emergency management agency and other responding agencies, there was loss of life that could have been prevented. I think we should take this in a very serious way. The responsi- bility of this Congress, one, is to ask the questions and to make sure it does not happen again.

I do commend not only the Demo- cratic leader for recommending that there be a task force or a select com- mittee to deal with the issue of the re- covery process and to be able to review the whole Hurricane Katrina experi- ence, but I am glad that the Speaker has taken her recommendation and moved on it and they will appoint a task force to deal with it, because I think it needs the kind of over- sight to make sure that we do not make the victims victims over again because we thought that it was impor- tant to appropriate some $50 billion- dollars towards the process without the appropriate oversight to make sure that it gets where it is supposed to be.

Mr. Speaker, I also feel, before I yield to my colleagues, that it is important that we all understand that we are in the first 2 minutes of the first quarter. If this were a football game, as it re- lates to the recovery process. I think the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and other Mem- bers from States that are constantly hit by hurricanes by hurricanes, and that we are in the very early stages.

We know that a number of Americans have been turned off by the recovery and the response, and there will be a time and place to be able to identify that. That time is now, that time is in the future, but also to make sure that we do not continue to fumble the ball.

When I say “we,” I think it is impor- tant to understand that we do have an
We had a devastating tragedy happen to us in our country, and that is to all of us, about 10 days ago. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and I literally live at one point or another through every storm in the “cone of error,” as it approaches the United States at some point or another, the gentleman’s and my home and the homes of our constituents are in the cone of error for some period of time. So we know what it is like to stare down any one of a number of different levels of hurricanes or tropical storms.

As we speak tonight, we have Ophella just about 100 miles off the coast of our State, yet again another tropical storm warning. We are up to “O” now. It is just never-ending.

One of the things that I would like to spend some time on tonight with both of your indulgence is we do need to get and during the 911 Marathon, one of the things that I did on Tuesday at home in south Florida was help to try to channel the energy of south Floridians who obviously were devastated by the last Category 5 hurricane that hit the United States. We suddenly hit us in south Florida, deep in the hearts of our community, and we had an outpouring of affection and assistance from across the world. So you can imagine listening to this, what people in south Florida so badly want to do is return the favor and give back to the people in the gulf States and across the country what was given to them 13 years ago.

They do not know where to channel that energy, because there are so many relief organizations, so many on-the-spot relief organizations that have cropped up in the last week; and, unfortunately, if you recall during Andrew, south Florida such a beautiful thing, you had various groups that will form within a matter of days to take advantage of a whole lot of money that is flowing through people’s hands.

So what we did in south Florida is we channel people’s energy through one organization, Volunteer Florida, which is an organization affiliated with the State that exists throughout the year to help foster volunteerism. But we turned it into the clearinghouse for our State and gave people a phone number that they can call. I will check my notes and provide it. I do not want to give out the wrong number. Logon to www.volunteerflorida.org. We are trying to make sure that people go through a number they know they can have confidence in.

Beyond that, there is an absolute necessity, I feel, for us to talk about what has gone on in the last 6 or 7 days, and the actions and words of the leadership that is running this country in response to this devastating tragedy is just inexcusable to me. While I have heard many of my colleagues and other people across this country say now is not the time for finger pointing, well, do you know what? If we did not talk about what was not going on last week, then, quite honestly, I think President Bush might start taking vacation.I think quite honestly that perhaps there would not have been a response even to the degree that we needed it without someone saying that the emperor had no clothes. Where was the help? Where was the cone of error, so often in south Florida that you have several days’ notice, and they did have several days notice that a Category 5 hurricane was bearing down on the gulf coast States. Where were the troops on the border of the cone of error? Where was the readiness? Where was the preparation? Where was the response? Where was the organization? It was nowhere.

We have got to make sure not only that it never happens again, but that there is an investigation and that there is a discussion in this body as to why it happened. We should talk about FEMA and why it is being led by a person who has absolutely no previous emergency preparedness or disaster experience, and why was it, in no small part, why his ineptitude was allowed to continue. Why a year ago when Florida faced four hurricanes, FEMA was handing relief checks out like candy to people who were not even victims of the storms.

There has got to be some accountability, and the time is not 2 months from now. We have billions of dollars that we are appropriating here and are about to appropriate that we should be appropriating, but we are going to go put it in the hands of people who have proven that they are incapable of handling disasters like this? Something needs to happen so that we can hold these people accountable on many different levels.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I agree 100 percent with the gentlewoman. And to look back and hear all the information that FEMA had beforehand, an article here from Cox News and the New Orleans Times, Dr. Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center, was talking to FEMA. They were going through simulations on what exactly could happen and what the worst-case scenario could be, what the storm surge capabilities were for overtopping levees.

I think it is important, if this is not pointing fingers, we get paid to oversee administrative government, and that is what we are doing here. The thing that is outrageous is that the people who are in charge and who are incompetent for those early days are the same people that are running the operation now. Thank God we have got some military in there now to actually fix some of the problems.

But I think it is important that we share with the American people, not to be critical, but so the problem gets...
fixed. This is our responsibility here. This is our constitutional responsibility here.

Dr. Max Mayfield, and you can get this on the Internet, the Cox News article said, knew storm’s potential. Just to read through here a little bit and share the same information, if you will, I think, that Dr. Mayfield who told FEMA that the strength of the storm and the potential disaster it could bring were made clear during both briefings and an informal advisory which warned of a storm surge capable of overtopping levees in New Orleans and winds strong enough to blow out windows of high-rise buildings.

“We were briefing them way before landfall, Mayfield said. It is not like this was a surprise. We had advisories that the levee could be topped.”

These guys had the information and they failed to respond. And the most insulting part of this whole thing is to have the President say days afterward that he did not think anyone anticipated a breach of the levees.

□ 2215

I mean, it is just not true. It is just not true because the FEMA people knew, and there were those advisories and there was all this information that FEMA had, and it is unacceptable that this is the way the government is supposed to work. Because after 9/11 the American people charged this Congress, reelected this Congress, reelected this President because he had the capability supposedly to keep us safe. I do not think there is one American out there now that would even feel close to safe if something happened here.

I do not know, and it seems like the goals that we wanted to try to communicate, interoperability where people could communicate with each other because they would have the proper communication equipment, the predisaster mitigation which they used out West for an earthquake where they actually went in early and secured buildings and spent $20 million, which ended up saving $500 million out there, that program that Mr. Witt started was called Project Impact; and the day the earthquake hit on February 28, 2001, was the same day the President cut that program. This was a lack of foresight for many, many, many years.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to just highlight that this is not an isolated incident. It would be easy to say that FEMA was just overwhelmed and could not possibly have been expected to be prepared for a storm the size of Katrina since this administration changed the rules of the game when it comes to FEMA. FEMA is an independent agency prior to the Bush administration and prior to its being absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security after 9/11. FEMA was an independent agency with a director and a staff that had expertise in disaster preparedness.

I want to just highlight for my colleagues prior to Hurricane Katrina some of the instances of irresponsible behavior on Secretaries Brown’s leadership. In 2004 Florida officials recorded 123 fatalities from last year’s hurricanes. We had four hurricanes that hit Florida last year. FEMA pays expenses for 315 deaths; 123 fatalities documented from last year’s storms. This is saying that the standard they are applying to 800 before we can help them.

In 2004 FEMA reimbursed over 5,000 people $9.3 million for rental assistance when a follow-up study showed that most residents never left their homes. In 2004 FEMA reimbursed people for 11-piece bedroom sets when they just owned a bed. In 2005 Hurricane Katrina strikes Florida damaging over 200 homes. FEMA has declined to pay individual assistance to those homeowners. And I stood in the yard of an 86-year-old woman on Monday who lives in my district who was in tears, whose hearing was so poor she could barely hear what I was saying to her. Her home had no roof. Her home across the street was basically crumpled in his yard, and around the corner was the same type of home with the roof ripped off and lying on the front lawn. FEMA has decided that there is an 800-home standard for damage before they will pay individual homeowners reimbursement for their damage.

Let me just show my colleagues the type of damage that FEMA says people are not eligible for assistance. This is what FEMA will not pay for. After Hurricane Katrina, as a Category 1 storm, struck Florida last week, this is the damage that they say these people do not deserve reimbursement for because we do not have 800 homes suffer this kind of damage.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Because why?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. FEMA is saying that the standard they are using in 2005, and as I have outlined for my colleagues, they had no such standard in 2004, coincidentally in a Presidential year, they are saying that because Florida did not reach the threshold of 800 homes that were damaged that our homeowners who have damage for restoration, for individual assistance, meaning they cannot get reimbursed by the government, by FEMA, for the damage.

Now, I will not claim by any stretch of the imagination that Floridians suffered the same type of strife and damage that people in the gulf States did from Katrina, but I will argue that hurricanes know no boundaries. Hurricanes do not respect State boundaries. Katrina did not know the border of Florida and Alabama and on westward. The impact on a homeowner in Florida is the same as it is on the homeowner who suffered the same kind of damage in a gulf State. This is what FEMA is denying. It is disgusting. And it is just not going to stop. We have got to get the word out to people, Mr. Speaker, that there are places that they can turn to for help, but clearly FEMA was not one of them.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we understand that Homeland Security Director, the FEMA Director, or the President of the United States can reverse an original decision by FEMA not to pay individual homeowners or assist individual homeowners who are not eligible, not through the homeowner’s insurance, that are eligible for Federal programs. It is almost like saying that we have the antidote for their problem, but there are only 200 or 300 people affected and we have to get to 800 before we can help them.

I mean, it does not make sense, and because of that we have asked the President, and a bipartisan letter has gone to not only the President but also to the FEMA Director and also to the Department of Homeland Security, about looking at this very issue. But I can tell the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) that if there are issues of the very obvious, what happens under a $50-plus billion dollar appropriations to an agency that cannot see that there is a need out there that needs to be met?

Let me tell the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) when Americans pay their taxes, they expect a response in times such as this. They do not expect bureaucratic lip service. They expect action. And I just want to make sure the people are clear on this. Folks may say, well, you know, you all are there and you all are Democrats and all, and it is your job to be able to point out everything that is wrong. That is incorrect. And I know the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is part of the South. Power of America, this, that, and the other; but the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and I are from the South, and I think this is an issue about how this country feels about the South, how they feel about people that live in the South.

I will tell my colleagues this: maybe in another part of the country the response would have been different, but I can tell the Members right now there are a lot of individuals that are down there that pay taxes just like anyone else that expects representation. I do not know, maybe this lady may be a Republican. She may be an Independent. We do not care. She needs assistance.

And the bottom line is that FEMA is supposed to be there in a time of need. The Federal Government is supposed to be there in a time of need. When the local government resources are out or depleted or coming close to being depleted, that is why we have a Federal Government. They are not independent commanders. They are not by itself. Alabama is not by itself, and I can guarantee my colleagues that Mississippi is not there by itself. So
July 7, 2005

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE

H7729

why should they be treated any differently than any other part of the country?

The bottom line I feel is what is the Federal obligation to the South? What is it? And I feel that we really do not have a picture for Americans. We really do not. They have seen it. And they saw folks having press conference after press conference talking about what the situation is. They say, we knew that 5 or 6 days ago. And what my colleague was talking about with the hurricane director, they knew. They were just hoping that the levees held.

But I think it is outstanding that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) brought pictures here tonight, because when we were talking about the 30-something Working Group, third-party and fourth-party validators are important because we have folks who take to the floor saying, well, it is not what some people tell you do you believe. What is your lying eyes? We see it on television.

The reason I talked about information, that it is important that we disseminate information, I want the Members from the South to let the American people to see what we get in the U.S. Congress. We get one sheet of paper talking about a recovery process. Like my cousin used to say, if I am lying, I am flying. The bottom line is that this came out as Congressional Advisory No. 13 on the 6th of September. This is yesterday’s advisory. Today is like three quarters of a page. I thought I would at least get a full-page report. It is just bullets and feel-good language, not telling us anything.

I just want to take this little segment out here while we are talking about the major inequities here, and hopefully, Mr. Speaker, hopefully, someone will say we need to correct this. Not only should we provide more information to Members of Congress but we should also make sure we provide information to more victims.

This is what it is: the Housing Task Force, whoever they are, are also identifying long-term housing facilities to assist disaster victims as quickly as possible. What is this? I am going to come in for a landing. There was a letter that was written today to a chairman of a major committee here of serious questions that were asked. Could New Orleans’ levee system hold? We knew that 5 or 6 days ago. And if it was gone and abolished, everything would be fine. So, if you bring that attitude to government, that government cannot do anything good.

And then your philosophy leads you to a point where you put an attorney for Arabian horses and a guy who used to run horse shows in charge of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, that is where that philosophy takes you, and then you get someone who is incompetent to handle the job, not a professional emergency management specialist, but just a political appointment, because government is for supplying our friends with graft, and that is all this is.

Now, the gentleman mentioned something, and I want to go through this and I read a little bit of this article earlier. And this is Dr. Mayfield and what he said. He participated, he and his staff participated in a 5-day Hurricane Pam exercise sponsored by FEMA and the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness last July, that assumed a similar storm as Katrina would hit Louisiana, and they called it Hurricane Pam at the time, on July 23rd of 2004.

So FEMA released, after they simulated this Hurricane Pam in Louisiana, FEMA announced the exercise and basically summed up the simulation. Here it is, Dr. Mayfield and what he said. He participated, he and his staff participated in a 5-day Hurricane Pam exercise sponsored by FEMA and the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness last July, that assumed a similar storm as Katrina would hit Louisiana, and they called it Hurricane Pam at the time, on July 23rd of 2004.

And then your philosophy leads you to a point where you put an attorney for Arabian horses and a guy who used to run horse shows in charge of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, that is where that philosophy takes you, and then you get someone who is incompetent to handle the job, not a professional emergency management specialist, but just a political appointment, because government is for supplying our friends with graft, and that is all this is.

Now, the gentleman mentioned something, and I want to go through this and I read a little bit of this article earlier. And this is Dr. Mayfield and what he said. He participated, he and his staff participated in a 5-day Hurricane Pam exercise sponsored by FEMA and the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness last July, that assumed a similar storm as Katrina would hit Louisiana, and they called it Hurricane Pam at the time, on July 23rd of 2004.

So FEMA released, after they simulated this Hurricane Pam in Louisiana, FEMA announced the exercise and basically summed up the simulation. Here it is, Dr. Mayfield and what he said. He participated, he and his staff participated in a 5-day Hurricane Pam exercise sponsored by FEMA and the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness last July, that assumed a similar storm as Katrina would hit Louisiana, and they called it Hurricane Pam at the time, on July 23rd of 2004.
It is criminal, criminal, what happened. You put an Arabian horse purchaser in charge of FEMA, you war-game it the year before, and the guy still does not know what he is doing, and people died because of it. That is the sad part of this whole thing.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, to piggyback on what the gentleman from Florida said about tax cuts, I mean it is just mind-boggling that yet again, their answer, their solution for everything is more tax cuts. I mean, I would not believe it unless I had it in print in front of me, but Treasury Secretary Snow said just the other day, today is September 7, he said yesterday at a press statement, this is in response to what we should do about Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath. He said, “Making the tax cuts permanent would be a real plus in a situation like this, because people would know they had going forward the advantage of lower tax rates,” Snow said. “And people know they are locked in going forward, it affects their behaviors. It makes them more confident of the future.”

Now, let us talk more about FEMA’s failures, because this is really what it boils down to at the end of the day, because we need FEMA to be there, we need FEMA to generate confidence in Americans. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans, and I am going to use the words “Republican,” but the Republicans ran last year on being the party that would be the best choice to protect people. They were the security party. That is supposedly the thing that tipped the scales.

Well, it is not just an issue of security in a terrorist crisis, which all of this resulting from Hurricane Katrina calls into question now, about whether they really are the party. They are clearly not the party of crisis.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. They have proved they are not the party.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. They have proved they would not be able to be there in a disaster, in a disaster of any major proportion.

Let me put it this way, because I have another chart here that is going to outline a couple of things that I think are important, FEMA’s failures. Let us talk about cleanup, and let me just acknowledge that “personnel” is spelled wrong on this chart, I really know they have to make sure the people knew that I know how to spell “personnel.”

Cleanup: FEMA has failed for pay for debris removal from private property. This has resulted in many homeowners incurring large expenses paying for the removal of not only their own fallen trees and other damage, but also rubble blown onto their lots from other locales.

Let me talk about Federal aid.

So we give them an “F” in cleanup, because they are basically ignoring Florida as if a storm never hit our State.

FEMA must be more responsible in allocating Federal aid. We are talking about the things that FEMA should have been doing already and must do going forward. About $30.8 million in FEMA money has been awarded to residents in Miami-Dade, a county that I represent. Congressman MEEK lives in, much of it for replacement of appliances such as televisions and air conditioners, although the storms last year in Florida barely grazed the county. Meanwhile, this year, when the storms did hit, now, he is even more distraught because they are not reimbursing people who have legitimate damage and roofs ripped off their houses. Meanwhile, other storm-ravaged areas still have many families who continue to be displaced because of the severe damage to their homes. So they get an “F” in Federal aid.

How about personnel? Subsequent reports detailed how FEMA inspectors received little training, that FEMA apparently has millions in assistance to other areas of the country largely unaffected by disasters; that government scientists said that FEMA misrepresented wind data that it used to justify the payments in Miami-Dade County last year, and that millions in assistance to hurricane-related funeral claims in Florida, even though the official death toll was only 123. So they get an “F” in personnel.

Fourth, the shocking statistics in terms of property, Florida officially recorded 123 fatalities last year from hurricanes, as I outlined, but were paid for 315 deaths, including those of a man who shot himself and a stroke victim who was hospitalized more than a week before the last storm hit, and that was documented by the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel. In one case, a FEMA worker tried unsuccessfully to persuade a coroner to count among the hurricane casualties a morbidly obese heart attack patient who purportedly was scared to death. This is the kind of thing that went on in FEMA before Katrina. These are the people that we are putting our confidence in and that people in the Gulf Coast States are having to put their confidence in, who are going to come in and rescue them and clean up this mess.

Most recently, disaster aid earmarked for hurricane victims in central Florida was misdirected. Twenty-two people who died of cancer, a brain aneurysm and, in one case, advanced AIDS, according to the local medical examiner. That was in the Sun Sentinel as well. Asked to comment on payouts in central Florida, FEMA spokesman James McIntyre did not provide a response. He also did not address how many more funerals FEMA has paid for since that time.

We have to make sure that FEMA takes responsibility is held accountable for its mishaps. This is an organization that gets an “F” in every single thing that they are primarily responsible for. This is the organization that Americans are supposed to be putting their confidence in, that is going to be there for them when disaster strikes, and in advance of disasters striking that they should be ready for, and afterwards when they have to come in and clean it up. It is just absolutely incomprehensible.

For example, with the President, responding to the damage that the gentleman talked about to the levees, he said on Good Morning, America last Tuesday, that no one expected the levees to break. Yet, he cut the budget that would have shored up those levees just last June, in 2004.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, that was the same, almost the same identical phrase that we heard from the Secretary, the new Secretary of State Condoneezza Rice, about 9/11 when she was National Security Adviser: Who would possibly think anyone would take a plane and fly it into a building like a missile? Well, we found out later that was not going to happen. They knew that was an option. It is the same old rhetoric with these people over and over and over again. It does not make any sense. It just does not add up. Now, all of a sudden, the Republicans are on the warpath to attack this Administration. They have all of this information here, and we have pages and pages and folders and folders full of how much they knew beforehand and played dumb. Mr. MEEK of Florida. The same letter that I read from earlier, I just want to read another paragraph out of the letter to the committee chairman from Ranking Member WAXMAN and also Ranking Member OBERSTAR and THOMPSON of the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Government Reform and also the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The President said, I don’t think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees. But just that is not true. Multiple reports have predicted that a large hurricane could overflow the levees and cause massive damage in New Orleans. Both the Red Cross and FEMA ranked a hurricane in New Orleans as the Nation’s most dangerous natural disaster threat. I am going to tell my colleagues, this is well documented. Senator Breaux, who is retired, came out of retirement and jumped on TV 2 days after the storm. Senator Breaux, I am sorry, I did not mean to pry, just I do not know what folks are talking about when they say they did not know this was going on. I mean, year after year, we tried to get money from the Federal Government. His entire congressional career was based on getting money for the levees. That is why some folks started talking about, well, you know, they are here talking all that mess, and we are trying to save lives, they are talking about what is not happening.

Let me tell my colleagues what we are doing here tonight. We are saving lives, literally. We are saving lives here and pointing out the inequities of an
agency that we just gave $10-plus billion to and said, You handle it, okay? And the bottom line is that just as upset as Americans were about 9/11 and the loss of life, they need to be upset about Katrina and the loss of life and the lack of oversight in governance. The White House did a terrible job.

So I think any American life that is lost when it could have been prevented deserves to be brought to the highest levels of Congress on both sides of the aisle. I am beyond partisanship right now. This is about responsibility. And the bottom line is, if the tables were turned and there was a man in the White House that had a Democrat, had a ‘D’ behind his name, we could not stop the line of Republicans out the door to talk about what he or she did not do when they were supposed to do it and how they were supposed to do it.

So the bottom line is this: What are we going to do? I do not have a family member, God bless, in this situation, but there are people that do. And guess what? They may not be a Member of Congress. We have to give voice to those individuals.

What commitment does the Federal Government have to the people that are living in the South? That is the question. That is the bottom line. I do not care if they are a chairman, ranking member, somebody elected them over something in this Congress. The bottom line is, What is the commitment to the South? Because that is the only thing that I can point out to my colleagues; I cannot come out with anything else.

Maybe the folks down there do not talk as fast as other folks, I do not know. Maybe they do not have endowed universities like we have in the North and in the central part of this country. I do not know. Maybe there are individuals that do not necessarily care about infrastructure and look at the warnings as it relates to New Orleans. Now it has happened.

The question is, what are we going to do about these individuals who are living in football stadiums and folks think it is okay for them to be there for 6 months. You can reach over and touch the next person in your bed. Do we have sex offenders living in the same stadium on the 50-yard line or the 60-yard line from a child? These are the things that we have to correct. These are the things that we must pay attention to. We cannot allow it to happen, or they will be made victims time after time again.

So the bottom line is that we have individuals that are displaced. We have a Federal agency that we are about to give $50-plus billion and I guarantee my colleagues, there will be no real discussion about oversight.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is exactly right. We are not going to let that happen.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And making individuals victims again. Because I guarantee, and I told you this earlier today, I am going to ask Senator Chertoff about the retirement community at 80, if God is willing, walking around with a walker, and someone looks back in the history books about what took place at this time in the moment, and they look at me and they say well, were you not a member of Committee at this time? What were you doing? I will tell them refer to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and also reflect on what happened and what the American people did because they knew what these individuals were doing and making these individuals victims again.

Now, do not get me wrong. I am not saying that it is intentional. But I guarantee you for folks who do not look and wear the flag of oversight and make sure that is right. It is not intentional. Their response was not intentional. It was just indifferent. The indifference is what is shocking. And you had Chris Wallace go through this exchange with Secretary Chertoff on Fox News Sunday this past Sunday.

Mr. Wallace said, ‘But Mr. Secretary, you know there are an awful lot of people around the country that are asking these questions and want to hear answers from you today. During the week, we saw you past week you seemed to minimize or not to know about a lot of problems on the ground in New Orleans. Let us watch some of those.’

And then he went on to show him some of the clips.

And this was Secretary Chertoff’s response: ‘We are extremely pleased at the response that every element of the Federal Government, all of our Federal partners have made to this terrible tragedy. There have been isolated incidents of criminality. We have all seen pictures of looting.’

Then he goes on to say: ‘I have not heard a report of thousands of people in the Convention Center who do not have food or water.

Well, I can understand why, because yesterday when we had the briefing in this Chamber from most of the members of the Cabinet, you had one of the Secretary of Defense’s military leaders stand up and say that the pictures we have all seen on TV are just like looking through a straw, that that does not show the full picture. We are looking through a straw, that they are extremely pleased with their response and it is getting extremely well. I do not know where the President was.

So then he goes on to say, what Chris Wallace says: ‘Mr. Secretary, how is it possible that you could not have not known on late Thursday, for instance, that there were thousands of people in the Convention Center who did not have food who did not have water, who did not have security, when that was being reported on national television?’

Secretary Chertoff says: ‘Well, Chris, you know, that is one of the issues we have to look at, is whether we were in constant touch with what was going on in the field, getting information from State and local officials. As it happened on that very Thursday I was in a
video conference with State officials and did not get any information about this. And one of the things we will look at is why in the middle of this emergent crisis there was a conflict in the information.

You know, I can tell Secretary Chertoff why the State and local officials did not feel like they had to tell you that there were people at the Convention Center, because you could not turn on your TV and not see them dehydrated and other people dying. How about the woman who had her dehydrated baby who she could not even wake up? I mean, I have a 2-year-old. God forbid that ever happened in my family. I can assure you that if it happened in the community that I represent, I have a hunch that the response would have been a little bit quicker because my constituents are not poor and they are not African American primarily.

You know, you talk about the South, and every time they are one of those Members that would be very protective of the South. But this could be a natural disaster in Detroit or in Wisconsin or name any State with a black community or a predominantly poor community. That is why for the grace of God they go there. I mean, really.

We are not here to point fingers. We are just here to point at what has happened in front of our very eyes. And this has just got to stop. We do have solutions with solutions. We cannot hand out $50 billion to a person who is running the show like it is a circus, like he is the ring leader in a circus, and not a very good one. It is just inexcusable. We cannot ever let this happen again, and we have got to draw a line in the sand and say this far and no further.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It almost brings up the point, whether it is black or white or whatever, number of electoral votes or your voters. If you know, if you have got a State that has enough electoral votes, we will maybe even be there before anything comes. But if you do not have enough, you know, you are on your own, and we are going to absolutely roll the dice.

And as we are kind of creeping into the final few minutes here, I want to just touch upon what the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Wasserman Schultz) has just said, that I hope the ultimate, we can all agree, that there is a line that we would like to see. There is a line that would be protective of everyone who is running into the Federal disaster area, those States that have been designated by the President. There are a number of grants and I just want to make sure, and also you know, if you want assistance as it relates to those, you can call and just ask the question. The operators will go over it with you. They are working 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You can call 1-800-621-FEMA, F-E-M-A, and that is 3362. So that is 1-800-621-3362 to register. If you are hearing impaired, you will dial the TTY line, which is 1-800-462-7585. I am going to read that other number over again. 1-800-621-3362. If you are deaf, you can call 1-800-462-7585. They also have an online, you can reach FEMA through FEMA acronym, FEMA.gov/register. That is again 24-hour. They also have 24-hour you can get the grant information. And even if you are stranded and have no money, I want to make sure you get to go after these programs that FEMA has available for individuals that are in the Federal disaster area, those States that have been designated by the President. There are a number of grants and I just want to make sure, and also you know, if you want assistance as it relates to those, you can call and just ask the question. The operators will go over it with you. They are working 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You can call 1-800-621-FEMA, F-E-M-A, and that is 3362. So that is 1-800-621-3362 to register. If you are hearing impaired, you will dial the TTY line, which is 1-800-462-7585. I am going to read that other number over again. 1-800-621-3362. If you are deaf, you can call 1-800-462-7585. They also have an online, you can reach FEMA through FEMA acronym, FEMA.gov/register. That is again 24-hour. They also have 24-hour you can get the grant information. And even if you are stranded and have no money, you may have to get on behalf of the other family members because they may not be in an area where they can receive that information. You have to help your family and friends through this process, even though government is reaching out to them.

The individual housing grants that are also available, this is the primary vehicle of assistance that FEMA provides to individuals. Also what that individual grant information does, it provides you with a voucher for short-term housing. Each individual can get up to $26,200 per individual or household. And I think that is important. And we will give you more information in the coming days on that.

Disaster unemployment relief. This program, with acronym of DUA, provides benefits to individuals that were previously employed or self-employed that have been made jobless because of a direct result of the major disaster which will be Katrina, that are not eligible for regular Federal or State unemployment insurance. I think that is important. But I still urge Americans and also Members to encourage their constituents to go after these programs.

Dislocated worker activities, this is a program that provides training and also related assistance to persons that have lost their jobs that are unlikely to return back to their current job or industry. That is important for individuals that are throughout the country.

I just want to be able to do the last couple of minutes here, we have folks that are all over the country, that are literally all over the country. And I am coming back to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

In Alabama, there are some 5,017 individuals; Arkansas, 5,534. I am just reading out some of the big numbers. Louisiana there are too many still there, 67,000 individuals. So there are a number of programs that are available. I urge you to go to the FEMA Web site or even call them. Mr. RYAN, do you want to give the Web site information?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. We are going to be trying to recruit college kids to go down and help with the clean up too. So it is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, on behalf of the 30-something Working Group, we would like to thank the Democratic leader, Mr. Speaker, for allowing us to come here to the floor once again, and it was an honor addressing the House once again.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHL of New York). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, this evening I wanted to spend the first few moments reflecting on the crisis in the House.