need to get them food stamp access. We need to make sure that they have access to education and housing and not just flung-housing all over the country. If you lived in New Orleans, you do not need to resettle yourself permanently in Utah. That is not what we would policy direct those people to. We want to bring them back. We want to set up transitional and then temporary housing and then eventually get them into permanent facilities, whether it is facilities that they have in the Federal Government or whether they be given the ability to help them to make their own purchases of homes, which would be a wonderful thing to see.

That is what the leadership in this Congress is going to need to make happen. It is certainly going to be suggested by our side of the aisle. We need to make sure that we come together and suggest it on both sides of the aisle. The reconciliation process should be suspended. There are a number of things that should happen, and we are going to continue to talk about that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, we usually would have a closing statement here, but our time has run out. We will have. I understand, the first Democratic hour on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, with that, we would like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30 Somethings Working Group to come to the floor, and it was an honor to address the House once again.

RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Price of Georgia). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. King) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized to have the opportunity to address the Speaker before this House.

This Nation has undergone the most serious natural disaster, the most costly natural disaster. Possibly not in the measure of lives but in the measure of treasure, it certainly has, and we pray for the recovery of those victims that are yet to be found. We pray that that number can stay as low as possible, and we know that, regardless of the number, each loss of life hurts and pains each family deeply.

This Congress has addressed Hurricane Katrina, done so quickly. We had a unanimous consent agreement after a conference call on Friday after the storm struck in its fury and the wind began to die down on Monday, the previous Monday. We appropriated $0.5 billion, Mr. Speaker, and we did so under a unanimous consent agreement. We did that because we know that we need to get resources into the hands of the people who were saving lives, lifting people off of rooftops and pulling people out of houses and bringing boats down through the communities, and we needed to make sure that the resources were there.

We needed to make sure that there was food, there was water, there was shelter, and this Nation watched on television and radio that were brought people together in the Superdome, in the convention center, other locations around New Orleans, other locations around Alabama, Mississippi and, of course, other places in Louisiana to take a look together that we need to make sure that we come together

This Nation has watched transfixed as we reacted and we deployed resources into the region and began to recover from this disaster. Each of us have different opinions about what was done right and what was done wrong, but Mr. Speaker, my position is that we are not done saving people. We are not done helping people get relocated. We are not done helping their lives get put back together, and they are not finished building for their future. Once that money is available and once they can start down that path and once we can see that we put a plan together that is going to help people get relocated, and at least in the short- and mid-term future, we will have seen to the needs of the infrastructure that will be time enough and plenty time enough for us to meet together in this Congress and to put together a chronological order of what happened, who knew what, why did they know it, what they were doing for the recovery, what communications did they have, what decisions were made that impacted on the rescue operations and the recovery operations. What did they know and when did they know it, Mr. Speaker, is one way to ask that question and what did we learn from this disaster.

Time will come and that will be soon enough, and perhaps in this hour I will go back and talk about how I think we should put together the system here in Congress to take a good look at this, but, right now, we are recovering from this disaster.

Congress appropriated $0.5 billion that Friday following the storm, and it was emergency spending. It was a special session, emergency spending money, $0.5 billion. Our report was that FEMA was spending $500 million a day. By the end of that day, the report was $750 million a day. So that was a calculus to get us through Labor Day weekend, appropriate $0.5 billion.

If asked to look at how much of that spending, it did not come early in the week. It did come later in the week, and the accounting came with the report for another $51.8 billion, and the calculus for the $51.8 billion was not readily available to us. The answer was simply we know we are going to spend more than another $50 billion, so let us appropriate it.

So this Congress laid out a blank check, and in that appropriation that was a check item. First, there was $1.8 billion in there for the Department of Defense, and they spent a lot of money down there and poured a lot of resources in. That is fine, but I believe the largest single line item ever passed in this Congress and appropriated without strings attached, without guidelines, without congressional direction was the $50 billion that went to FEMA. That was done for an amount of that money. I wanted to know first, how was FEMA spending, and now the number went from $500 million a day to $750 million a day to $2 billion a day, and where was that money going. I happen to look into those things and how much meals, how much fuel, how many rental units, how many people are on payroll, how many contractors are coming in and that are contractors that are being paid, how do these contracts all add up, how does it divide out, how does it average out.

I thought it would be something that would be a calculation that one could track, and when I did get a look at those numbers, it had $3.3 billion there for emergency spending in Louisiana, which was another $50 billion, so let us look what did they know it, Mr. Speaker, is one way to ask that question and what did we learn from this disaster.

In addition, in the $50 billion that came for the second appropriation there was another 100,000 trailer houses in there for the people in Mississippi. So now FEMA has had the authority apparently to purchase 300,000 trailer houses for the cost of $4.9 billion, $400 million of it will go for the 30,000 trailers, and that is rough numbers. Those trailers are available, but 270,000 trailers are back-ordered for a cost of about $4.5 billion, declared and deemed to be emergency spending, the kind of thing that is going to help save lives, recover people and, in fact, it took resources that could have been better used in the recovery process.

In addition, in that appropriation there was $650 million that was declared to be emergency spending, dedicated to mitigation of future disasters. Mitigation of future disasters cannot be characterized as emergency spending and cannot be characterized as something that helps disaster victims today in the gulf coast. It is money that could have gone to help people, but it is pigeon-holed, and it is committed, and it is committed. We do not know what they are. Congress was not apprised of that, and yet we have an oversight responsibility.

All appropriations must start in this House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, and those appropriations then flow through here over to the Senate and from the Senate then probably back, not often back to conference but to the President. We start the appropriations process.

The Founders were very clear in our responsibility and our duty here. You cannot spend money without the House of Representatives initiating this, and
So as I watched this unfold and had my difficulty in getting answers, I began walking the phones last Thursday. I had two staff people that worked diligently into the night on Thursday and started again on Friday and worked until 11:30 at night on Friday night trying to come up with contact numbers so I could make a phone call and talk to a few of the people that were in the region down in the gulf coast. We could give me some of the answers and what the real plans were, if there are any; what kind of definitive answers and responses could we get.

We were not able to make contact in any meaningful way; and so along about Saturday, in fact about half time at the Iowa State-Iowa game, I made a decision to jump on a plane in Ames. I left at the end of the third quarter. It was hard to do, but Iowa State was ahead 23 to 3 at the time, so I went back. I boarded a little Bonanza airplane, a little single-engine, and we flew our way towards New Orleans.

We stopped in Little Rock that night and stayed out of the area. There was not a room to be had anywhere in that close region from Baton Rouge on south. In fact, even north of Baton Rouge. So we stayed in Little Rock, and then went back in the air at 5:15 in the morning and flew on into New Orleans and landed there about 7:26 a.m. There was no commercial traffic going in or out of the airport. There were military air flights that were going in and helicopters moving around, but not the real intensity that you might expect to see, and I found out why.

We pulled up there to the flight service, and they looked out and came out to greet us. Real fine folks there. They said, well, I have a box of meals ready to eat. That tells you they have been getting resources out for quite some time. Everywhere you go there is cans of water and bottles of water, and sometimes pop and food sitting around. It is not always the finest quisine, but it is nutrition just the same.

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River dikes and all around this way. So this is the bowl. This is the bottom of the bowl, Mr. Speaker; and this is the area where the people suffered the most.

Listening to the briefing there, I wanted to add a few words about the people that are on the front lines that have been working relentlessly for, I have lost track of the days now, 14, 15, 16 days. Maybe it is 16 or more days. Some of those people have worked 20 hours a day or longer than that time. Some did not leave duty and just nodded off a little in between from one crisis to another.

As I began to walk around up there in their operations center and talking to different officers and talking to different people that were there, I began to find out a lot about what they had been doing. The 82nd Airborne is the military unit that is taking care of the communications there. In fact, simply because of the service that they have provided communications system they set up, they finally linked together the rest of the agencies, the nongovernmental organizations and the Federal agencies that are there, linked them together in a communications network. I believe that now, they meet every day at least once a day for a joint meeting where they all sit in the room. And they are all in that room, by the way, talking to people next to them and exchanging information, looking back to the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, gave a good explanation of what happened in this hurricane/flood that was Katrina, and it was this; if you were going to do a military assault on a city, the first thing you would do would be to go in and cut off the power and the communications, which Hurricane Katrina did. The wind took out the power lines. The wind took out some of the cell phone towers. It took out the ability to make telephone calls. It took out the ability to turn on the lights and run anything. It shut down the communications. This city was shut down. No lights, no power, no telephones. Well, sporadic cell phone service that finally just sputtered and died out. That went on.

That is the first operation you would do, would be to wipe out the communications and the power. The second thing you would do would be to cut off all the transportation routes to the city, which this flood did. Sometimes it just took out the access, or flooded the access to the bridges; and sometimes it took out, I believe it was Highway 10, a bridge that is right out and dropped it right down into the water. But it shut down the transportation routes in and out of New Orleans.

That is the second thing you would do; then you would have the flooding, shut off power, communications, and then cut off transportation, or access to the city. And then the third thing you would do after you immobilized the city would be to attack, and that is what the flood did. This flood poured over the dike through the 17th Street Canal, through this other canal, and then filled this deep bowl up here with up to 16 feet of water in these areas and drifting on out to this perimeter along this way.

While that was going on, we had people that knew that there was a problem brewing. They knew the bowl was starting to fill, but they could not get over here to see how much water was coming in there just was no way to get access to do that. So they could only speculate. And if you cannot see the water pouring in, you cannot tell how much water is coming in. You can have some degree of knowledge as to how fast it is; but when the power is out and it is at night, you cannot really talk about what is going on.

On top of that, as I had my conversations with the people over there, I found out that on Monday afternoon, by 3:30, there were looters out then, in force, in gangs, with guns, already stealing, already looting, and taking shots that were keeping our rescue people from going in.

Now, when you think about going in in a boat in a swamp in an urban enviroment with your communications, with your capability to be trained to do that. We have never envisioned that kind of warfare, with a flooded city where you go in with a John boat and float on in there and try to rescue people while under fire. That is not part of what we have experience with or anything we have ever imagined. So the gangs intimidated, the shots were fired, and they kept the rescue operations and some of the recovery operations and some of the analysis operations and some of the logistical operations and some of the medical operations in an almost impossible situation and tried to identify what was going on and being able to identify this problem.

Meanwhile, New Orleans is filling with water, and it filled beyond any level it had ever been at before. Now you had the perfect storm. And I could talk about the weather forces that brought that out, and I think what I would do is just to give the quickest of answers. Most people, I think, Mr. Speaker, have watched this on television, and it was almost a perfect storm. The pressure point of where the eye of the hurricane was, how the wind drove and the counterclockwise spinning of the hurricane, where it sat over here to the east, or to the right of New Orleans, slightly to the right of New Orleans.

That wind that came from the south and up in here in the outlet of Lake Ponchartrain off of the open gulf here drove water up into the 17th Street Canal, a lake that is maybe 8 to 15 feet deep; but it is a huge lake. And it pushed so much water up into this lake that there was half again more water than there was before the storm. Eight to 10 feet more water in this lake driven up by the low pressure center, which actually lifts water up that is in the center of a hurricane.

And then driven by 150 or more velocity winds, pushed that water in and shoved an extra 10 feet up into Lake Ponchartrain, and then stacking that water over here on the north side.

And when the hurricane moved further to the east, this counterclockwise motion turned that wind around from the south, southeast, where it was driving the water into Lake Ponchartrain, and brought it over to the top; and it was coming now down from the north. And you had 10 feet of water pouring down here with 8 to 10 feet on top of it, and all that surge and splash went right up against here and breached the levee for the 17th Street, here and I believe there.

So it was the perfect storm, but it was a perfect storm that was predicted. It was actually predicted in The Times Picayune newspaper in late 2002, if I have my dates right. I have read all of the articles. It is extraordinarily informative. There is one that says, “Worst Case Scenario.” What I have just described was the worst case scenario.

But, nonetheless, I sat in on that briefing, engaged in that briefing, gave a little talk to the people there working, giving their hearts out for the people in their communities, and they are proud of the work that they do. They are humble people with an inner pride. As I stood and looked them in the eye, I could feel that commitment to Americans, dedication to Americans, all of us pulling together. People from all over the United States came down to work in the gulf coast region to provide relief as fast as they possibly could. They gave their all.

The airport in New Orleans, the Lusignan Armstrong International Airport, was separated into several different areas. One concourse was a hospital and triage area. There were two other areas for the victims of the flood, the future evacuees. And then the troops and the rescue workers, they worked day and night and any day to sleep. Sometimes there would be room. Sometimes it was a corner, if they slept at all.

They went to work. They went to work, to save lives. They worked out on one of these days at the rate of 10,000 lives a day being pulled out of New Orleans through the operations there at the airport.
We know that the Coast Guard saved a high number. The last number I heard was 9,000. I expect it is more than that.

The numbers of people now in shelters has been diminishing significantly. There are millions now coming through. As flood victims, they are still giving up. Some people like to stay in their homes. They are realizing this is going to be a long time, so they are starting to come out. As they come out, they are being placed in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama and further up in the United States.

I am happy to say that the Fifth Congressional District of Iowa has welcomed some victims of Hurricane Katrina. All of us are reaching out. What we are seeking to do in the Fifth District of Iowa is ask the county seat mayors to conduct a meeting. Many had those meetings, bring with them and ask to sit at the table, the county emergency manager, the pastoral groups, representatives of the churches within the county, the school administrators and the top employers in the counties so we can get a sense of what jobs are available.

What we want to do and are positioning ourselves, I call it the tour guide technique. I want to make sure that we have a household that is identified that is ready to receive a family. I want to make sure there is a place in the school for the children that might come. I want to make sure that house is ready, and the people know when they pull into town, whether on a bus or plane, they get off of their transportation, whichever mode it is, there would stand the mayor with a smile and a handshake and welcome them to the city. Also next to him would be a pastor of the faith of their choice, if they had a choice, and next to him or her would be the family that will help them get acclimated to the community and any other resources they might need. We will help with job placement and interviews. That is happening across the country.

I would like it to be one-stop shopping within the county and determine how many families we can take within each county and set up that system so people do not go off into the unknown. The evacuees have lived in that region all of their life, and now they have to do something different. There is no housing available near New Orleans. Baton Rouge is full. There are no hotel rooms anywhere there.

I had the privilege of using a Red Cross cot the night before last. They gave me a little place in the corner to lay down and sleep, and I am grateful for their hospitality.

When we flew on the first day after the briefing, I hitched a ride in a different helicopter and went from there on down the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico about 90 miles south of New Orleans. Right here is the Corps of Engineers and the city pumps for New Orleans are pumping not quite two and a half times the flow that comes down the Mississippi River past Sioux City, Iowa. That is a tremendous amount of water.

After the briefing at the Corps of Engineers, I hitched a ride on a different helicopter and went from there on down the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico about 90 miles south of New Orleans. Today, there is some question whether it is 90 miles south or 75 miles south. The Gulf of Mexico has invaded and come upstream a ways. That is an indistinct line today because of the storm.

We flew along the Mississippi River, and along that river there are two dikes. There is a river dike. This would have been the dike to stop the flood. The river dike is about 90 miles to the Gulf of Mexico, that 75 to 90 miles. There is a river dike that is approximately 25 feet above sea level. That was built by the Corps of Engineers to protect the boats for shipping up and down. The shipping was moving the day before. There was a lot of traffic in the river. I could see it accelerating the day went on. That dike was on one side.

Approximately a half mile to the west is another dike, and that dike is approximately the same elevation. I do not know what elevation it is. It does not appear to be about the same given where the water stands, and that protects the...
other side of the dike and about that half mile wide strip in the middle from the surge and the storms and the hurricanes from the gulf.

So you have a strip of land between two dikes, a dike on either side about 25 feet above sea level, half a mile wide strip in the middle, with a highway down the top of one of them. People think they have protection from the levees. They think, I have a levee on the front side, on the river and on the gulf side, and so how could you be more safe, you say, in between the two levees.

Mr. Speaker, there is community after community along that 75- or 80-mile stretch; and these communities do not look to have been very big. They look like there were approximately 300 people here, 700 people there, typical small communities in that flat-bottom ground, a little farming going on and not any big volume. Every once in awhile there is an oil refinery, and at one location there was a heliport to service the oil platforms out in the gulf.

As we flew along that, and, remember, I had been desensitized by about 2 hours in the air over New Orleans. I looked at where trees were down, houses flooded up to the roof tops, roof tops with holes chopped in them that people had climbed through, and after seeing that for a couple of hours, you get desensitized. But as we went south along the Mississippi River, I found that the desensitization that had taken place and the numbness that sets in after seeing all of that destruction did not condition me for the condition of that strip of land between those two dikes.

That is some of the most utter destruction that I have ever seen in my life, and it is the longest expanse I have ever seen. As you watched that, I began to piece together what happened. Down there, there were homes from an entire community that were just blown away. The buildings were just shattered, and there would be just kindling stacked up against the dikes with all kinds of trash, boards and jugs, you name it. But entire communities were just plain footings there for the houses. Maybe a flat concrete pad was there. Community after community was like that. Sometimes there would be a church or school left standing. In one town, part of the school was left standing, but next to the school the water tower was blown down, crashed, bent, destroyed.

I have seen some destruction in my life, and I have seen power antennas, towers go down. I saw telephone poles that were blown clear out of the ground. But I have never seen a water tower pushed down by the force of nature in my life. But that water tower went down. And we got a picture of the water tower did not come the name of the community to memory, but I can go back and look at that. And a number of those communities took similar devastation, but all of the rest of the water towers stuck together. That went down.

There was one family location, and I think this is a time to look at a representative example, Mr. Speaker. This is a building location, and it appears to be a dwelling; but it may have been a dwelling and a shop. This is steel piling that has been driven down into the ground so that it can withstand hurricane-force winds. But at least Category 4½ or so, blew that sheet metal clear on through the building, stripped it down just to the I-beams that were driven to the ground. And the rubble that is laying around, there is nothing but debris. Hurricane-force winds. It is just everything was its unique piece of disaster, and pieces of property of the family were scattered all over; but there was this time, who knows, hundreds of thousands all over in that region.

There is no way, Mr. Speaker, that anyone can get a handle on the scope of this disaster without having flown over the region in its entirety, got down and dug in with the people and spent some time there, and I did not get to spend enough time there, and then go out on the ground and walk among this kind of disaster. But one of these places, very near where the water tower was blown down, there was a set of buildings that looked something like this. They were all shredded into this unrecognizable gnarly metal mass, and a flagpole had survived. There is no way that a flag would survive like this; but this flag, it had not started that project yet. It had not started that project yet. It had been severely, but it had survived. And this poor fellow who did not have anything except a mass and the mess he cleaned up did not have value, had not started that project yet. It had to come in there on a boat, and he had to go over to that flagpole and reran Old Glory up to the tip of that flagpole, and there it flew in all its glory. And I can tell my colleagues it catches our eye, Mr. Speaker, we see something like that, that sign of patriotism, that sign of defiance, that sign of determination that says, Katrina, you did not get to me. This might slow me down a little bit. It is a bump in the road, and, in fact, it is a pretty severe bump in the road, but you cannot break people's spirit that is as strong as these people's spirit is. And I saw that spirit in the floods in 1993 when we had those in Iowa when people pulled together, and I see this spirit down in the gulf coast today, Mr. Speaker.

So as we flew over that disaster, we began to see piece after piece of costly damage by that storm. The water had surged up the Mississippi River. The levees had stood and held back the water up, and the wind had driven it up the Mississippi River. And when we think about a river that has got 25-foot high levees on either side, to push that up that high and have that splash up against the levees, and in a lot of cases the levees held, but the water spilled over the top but did not breach it.

In that surge it lifted up grain barges; then put them up on the dry. Of those, as high as clear at the top of the dike. And there is one tow there that I happened to notice, a tow being, Mr. Speaker, that when one ties barges together, you can enlarge the size that is that they go down the river with, that is called a tow. And for us in the upper part of the Mississippi River, about 15 barges is a pretty good tow.

So there are 40 is so. But I happened to see one that had 30 barges in the tow; and of the 30, 25 of them were still tied together. The other five barges had gone off somewhere, and some had been pushed up on the dry. A couple were capsized. I could see some of them turned over on their side. But 25 of the 30-barge tow were all lifted up off the surface of that water. The water actually lifted them and floated them up and set them up on the bank, 25 barges, Mr. Speaker, altogether, all sitting up on the high and dry.

Ships that were just pushed together and shattered; shrimp boats by the dozen, 15 of them in one cluster just sitting there. And some against a levee and turned over. Some completely capsized, a lot of them on their sides. There was one company, I think it would be a single company, that had what I call tender boats, and these boats were painted yellow and blue. They were all painted the same. They had nine of them that I could find, and who knows if there were others that might have been sunk or blown out to sea; but these boats are, I am going to guess, 75 or more feet long, maybe 80 feet long; and I expect they are the kind that go out to lift the catch off of the smaller shrimper boats that were stacked up all along the levee, and most of them were destroyed.

But these tender boats, these larger ones, the yellow and blue ones, of the nine that I counted the day before yesterday, Mr. Speaker, there were two of them that were sitting side by side right on top of the levee, right dead center of the highway on the levee here, one on the side of the levee and one in the other lane, tied side by side. 25 feet above the water. That storm surge had lifted them up and set them in the middle of the dike. And the other seven identical boats were all apparently tied together so that they would ride out the storm better, and they apparently stayed together.

But of those, three were floating in the channel and four of them were up on the dry. So of the ten, two of them on the dry, two of them in the middle of the highway up on top of the levee, and four of them sitting up, I suppose, 10 or 12 feet above the water level. We take somebody's lifetime work and down there and see something like that happen to it, yes, they can put it all back and they can recover; but the magnitude, the awe, the power of this storm was, again, beyond a person's ability to comprehend unless we go down there and look at that and study it.

But the water surged up the Mississippi and floated barges out on top.
of the dike and took ocean-going vessels and put them up on the dry, large ones; and that was powerful. The wind blew so hard that it just blew all of the buildings over and stacked them up against the levee on the other side, shattering them, and took down other tree. And the trees that stood, the leaves were blown off of them. They stood there with just branches, and a lot of times the branches were not broken so much as the velocity of the wind just pulled the leaves off and left a forest there that looked like December in Iowa, not September in Louisiana. So, Mr. Speaker, it was a disaster beyond my ability to understand the scope of it until I went and took a look.

By the way, that surge in the Mississippi River that floated things up over the levee, a surge also came back from the Gulf side that did nearly the same thing or maybe even equal to the same extent as the Gulf side. So they had water from both sides, a surge as high as 27 or more feet; and that water came so fast that actually last night I talked to a shrimper there in northeastern New Orleans who had five boats, three of which were up on the dry, while two of them survived. They were on the west side of New Orleans. And he said that he had a friend that was in his house when that surge of water came, that wall of water came; and it was approximately 3 minutes from the time the water started to rise until he had to have a hole cut in his roof to get out through the attic when the water raised that fast. Only 3 minutes to get ready for that kind of a disaster because of that low pressure center and that push of that wind, Mr. Speaker. It was an awesome thing, and the scope of this disaster is also quite awesome.

Then after we came back from there, I went over to the Red Cross headquarter and I talked to Mr. Clark, and in the matter I walked around and talked to some people, looked at the resources that they had. And it was very well presented by the Red Cross people. I know some of them. In fact, I ran into six Iowans down there that were hard at work, saving lives and helping people and doing so in a very friendly and warm way. I do think we can be proud of these rescue workers. They are working 20, 21 hours a day. Some of them are working 30 hours a day. And one of the resources that they, after they walked around and talked to them and got a feel for what they had gone through. And as I walked through the gymnasiums that are the shelters for the victims of the hurricane, I talked to a number of the victims there, and found one that would like to come and be a truck driver, and he had a commercial driver’s license. I think we can help a person like that. We carried some communications for some other people that were having little difficulty among their communications out. I talked to people that were serving in the Red Cross center from places like Michigan, Ohio, I mentioned Iowa, Minnesota, California. And they can vouch for the kind of work that California. According to their measure or some report’s measure, perhaps more than 50 percent of the Red Cross workers at least in that in region are from California, and that is an opportunity to say a word about that kind of an effort that is coming out of that State. There are California people all over helping people from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama.

The military took some criticism, Mr. Speaker, because it was alleged that they were slow. But yesterday when I was in Slidell, Louisiana, and that is a town right near the Mississippi border, one of the guards in the shelter there was walking through, and I stopped to talk to him. I remember his name. His name is Cunningham. He was part of the 311th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama; and I asked him when he came into the storm zone. And he said, Sir, we took off on Monday afternoon.

I said, How did you do that? He said, Well, we came across Mississippi, coming to the west, and some of those places we could not get through the road. So they used chainsaws. They used Humvees. They used chains. They pulled trees out of the way. They cut their way through. In fact, General Myers announced to us that was how the National Guard got in. They chainsawed their way in. I met a specialist from the 311th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama that actually did that. And as I listened to him talk and the 300 people that are part of that battalion, that is the kind of heroism that did not just quite make it to the mainstream news media.

And when we look at an area that is 93,000 square miles, the size of Kansas, and we have a mainstream media that is concentrating on looking for the story, looking for the hot spot, trying to find someone that will step up in a complaint about the service that they are not getting, that is one element of this, and I will not deny that some of that exists; but there is a whole huge other element out there in 89,000 square miles of that 93,000 square miles where we have thousands and thousands of heroes, thousands and thousands of stoic victims of this storm, and thousands and thousands of people whose lives will never be the same, Mr. Speaker.

So as I met with them and listened to them, it reminded me of the times when I had seen lives shattered in other natural disasters, in particular our 1993 flood, and that touches a nerve and touches a cord with me because of my own personal experience with that storm, and I will save that for another time, Mr. Speaker. On my particular experience in the 1993 flood. But I believe that was the force that motivated the people to go down there that was the force that caused me to want to see this entire thing.

So after meeting with the victims and the future evacuees and having a conversation around there with the people working in the shelter, seeing the resources that they had, the organization that they had, the dedication that they had, they need a few more cots and they need a few more nurses and they are squeezing by and they are able to provide, but it is an uplifting thing to see a look in the eye of people who are fulfilling a sense of mission, a sense of duty, a duty to their country, duty to their faith; and it gives everyone strength to be around the kind of people that will commit themselves in that fashion.

Later on in the day I took a drive down into some of the worst damage, and that was down along a levee that goes into actually northeast of the Lake Pontchartrain, south of Slidell. And down in there there are homes on both sides of the levee. One might go for a half mile or a mile and not see a home intact, not see anything but the stubs of pilings where homes were where all of that had been there. And that disaster was so bad that we see the rare exception when there was a building that was held together that was intact. I walked through there and looked at some of the things that I found, and some of the things that we see bring it home. They bring home what kind of suffering there is, and some of it is symbolism, Mr. Speaker, but I do have a picture here that shows some kind of symbol that these are real people.

This caught my eye, Mr. Speaker. This would have been an anniversary gift that was given, probably from husband to wife. It has two doves on the top, and it says, “Happy Anniversary,” and it is laying in the rubble, just like that, that is untouched; I just walked up, and this was yesterday afternoon late, and I took this picture. I noticed that one of the doves is still intact, it’s picture here on top of this material, but one of the doves is broken and laying here. When I saw that, I had to ask myself the question, do we know if a fallen dove is a fallen dove? Is one of this couple gone? Has one by the wind and lost to the storm and one is left to survive, or are they both okay and looking for each other? This kind of a scene, a scenario of families that are separated has been replayed over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker. A lot of human suffering, and the breadth of this and the depth of this is not something that is understood yet by the American people or by
LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. Fazio (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today on account of official business.

Mrs. Jones of Ohio (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today on account of district business.

Mrs. Maloney (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today and the balance of the week.

Mr. McNulty (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today.

Mr. Walsh (at the request of Mr. DeLauro) for today and to sober 14 on account of a death in the family.

Mr. McHugh (at the request of Mr. DeLauro) for today on account of attending a funeral.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

The following Members (at the request of Ms. Woolsey) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Ms. Herseth, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. McCarthy, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. Brown of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. Woolsey, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. Kaptur, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. Emanuel, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. Gene Green of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. Poe) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material):

Mr. Burton of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and September 14, 15, and 16.

Mr. Gutknecht, for 5 minutes, September 20.

Mr. Poe, for 5 minutes, September 14.

Mr. McHenry, for 5 minutes, September 14 and 15.

Ms. Foxx, for 5 minutes, September 15.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 252. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land in Washoe County, Nevada, to the Board of Regents of the University and Community College System of Nevada.

S. 264. An act to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize certain projects in the State of Hawaii.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 804. An act to exclude from consideration as income certain payments under the national flood insurance program.

H.R. 3669. An act to temporarily increase the borrowing authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for carrying out the national flood insurance program.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. King of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.