In 1992, after raising four biological children, James and Virginia Lawrence welcomed into their home their first foster child. Little did they know that this decision would be the first step in what would become a life-long commitment to helping needy children. Over the last twelve years, the Lawrences have tirelessly devoted their lives to caring for, loving, and supporting more than 200 children who have come into their home through Tennessee’s foster care system.

The Lawrences stand out as foster parents for two reasons: their absolute devotion to the children who come into their home, and their tireless work to reunite children with their birth parents. According to Mrs. Lawrence, many of the birth parents “needed parenting themselves. We taught many of them how to be parents, by providing counsel, offering advice and by our example.” Whenever it became clear that returning to a birth parent was not a good option for one of their foster children, the Lawrences knew what to do—they simply adopted the child. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence have extended their loving family by adopting Alissa, food to Peggy, 21 and Shelby, 18.

Mr. Lawrence said that, before retiring from the city’s police force, he was greatly affected by the many children taken from their families. That experience moved him and his wife to open their home to children in need of a healthy, secure home environment. He added that, “helping children has been a blessing for him and his wife as well.” Virginia Lawrence said that, “having the kids around keeps your heart beating another day.” She continues to teach the four foster children currently in their home the independent living skills they’ll need to build their own rewarding life.

The Lawrences’ big hearts, patience and devotion is evidenced by the countless number of children they have reached out to over the years; and in their willingness to continue opening their doors to young people in need of a warm, secure and loving home.

On behalf of the Fifth District of Tennessee, I congratulate and thank the Lawrences for setting a wonderful example of what it means to make a difference in the community and in the lives of our most vulnerable children. I hope we’ll all reflect on the Lawrence’s model of ordinary people, doing extraordinary things as we reach out to help those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

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CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF OSI-RIS CHRISTOPHER EARL NURSE

HON. JOE WILSON OF SOUTH CAROLINA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today I am happy to congratulate Shannon and Courtney Nurse on the birth of their new baby boy. Christopher Earl Nurse was born on September 13, 2005, at 10:24 p.m., weighing 6 pounds, 2.4 ounces, and measuring 19.5 inches long. Osiris has been born into a loving home, where he will be raised by parents who are devoted to his well-being and bright future. His father Courtney is a tremendous kid and a promising and rewarding people throughout Capitol Hill. Today, we are pleased to celebrate Osiris’ healthy birth and welcome him to Washington.
company to tremendous growth during his tenure. Business Week named him Top Manager in 1995. Lew was also a pioneer in working to elevate women to top executive posts and was recognized with the Catalyst Award in 1991 for his efforts.

In writing about Lew this Monday, Business Week praised him again: “Platt was respected, admired, and just plain liked by HP employees, customers, and even rivals. Platt was genuine, self-effacing, and honest. He was quick to give personal accolades to others, and to accept criticisms...with grace.”

It was his integrity, I think, that brought Boe-ing to seek his leadership at a time when it was beset with controversy at its highest levels. Leading the company’s Board, he was able to provide critical stability when it was needed most.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure to know Lew Platt and to work with him. He was a gentle man with a superb intellect. He was taken from us too soon and had so much more to give, but he leaves a rich legacy of family, of leadership and of extraordinary contributions to our community and our country. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and work of this good man and extending to his wife and entire family our deepest and sincere sympathy.

EXPRESSING THE CONDOLENCES OF THE NATION TO THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

SPEECH OF
HON. MICHAEL R. TURNER
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, September 7, 2005

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I am a co-sponsor of this resolution which expresses the Nation’s condolences to the victims of Hurricane Katrina and commends the resiliency of the citizens of the States impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Our hopes and prayers go out to the men, women, and children whose lives have been forever changed by this tragic natural disaster. We have all been moved by the images of destruction in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, and the lives taken by Hurricane Katrina.

We have also been moved by the flood of compassion that is replacing the flood waters of Katrina. As we mourn the dead and express our sympathy to those who have lost loved ones, we can take heart in the efforts of those who are aiding the recovery effort.

We have been inspired by the efforts of private citizens and organizations to help those in need. From doctors to nurses to police officers and many others, Americans are pulling together to help their fellow citizens in the Gulf Coast States.

I am proud of the work of the service men and women from Wright Patterson Air Force Base in my district in Dayton, Ohio in aiding the relief effort. Additionally, I have been overwhelmed by the number of phone calls to my offices from Ohioans who are anxious to help in whatever way possible the people affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Speaker, we will always remember the victims of Hurricane Katrina and we will continue to help the people of the gulf coast as they rebuild their homes and their lives, and thank those working to assist those who have endured what most of us cannot imagine.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUBEN HINOJOSA
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably delayed in meetings with my constituents. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on Roll Call 465, 466, and 467.

INVESTIGATING THE KATRINA CATASTROPHE

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support for the implementation of an independent and bipartisan commission that will lead a thorough investigation that will pinpoint what went wrong before, during and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Long before Hurricane Katrina hit land as a category five hurricane, engineers, environmentalists and military personnel have known for years that a strong hurricane, like Katrina could devastate bowl-shaped New Orleans. Without prompting questions about why more was not done in advance to mitigate the damage or respond more effectively in the storm’s wake. For years, scientists have warned local, state and federal officials that the strength of a storm like Katrina would threaten the integrity of the 287 year old levee system and could cause massive flooding of the New Orleans area, if the system was not properly improved and maintained.

Now, as survivors are slowly evacuated and are receiving the help they so dearly need, the world is beginning to ask some pertinent questions. They are legitimately questioning the efficacy of the responses from each level of government, especially the slow and inadequate response of FEMA and the Federal government whose policies and government cutbacks might be responsible for the loss of thousands of lives. How does an event such as the Katrina Catastrophe occur when there was previous knowledge that the levees were in disrepair? The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had been working with local officials to strengthen the city’s defenses in case of a massive storm, but federal funding for improving the levee system and implementing other projects to keep water from overtaking New Orleans decreased under the Bush administration. The Corps of Engineers responsible for maintaining had approximately $114 million worth of hurricane protection projects, however with federal funding down 44 percent; no new contracts for construction had been awarded since early in fiscal year 2004.

Why? The Iraq war took priority over domestic disaster preparation. As a result, the money needed to strengthen natural infrastructures against natural disasters was transferred into the President’s budget to fund homeland security and the war on Iraq. Also, our National Guard who is responsible for protecting our homeland from the threat of disaster was greatly affected by this administration’s policies. As people begged through news cameras for food, water and shelter, our National Guardsmen were far and few in between. Most of them were fighting and continue to fight in Iraq. Most importantly, much of the equipment and materials needed, like the Guard’s high water vehicles, re-fuelers and generators required to execute rescue missions to provide food, water and medicine to those trapped on their roofs or in attics were transported to Iraq.

In addition, the Bush administration made significant structural changes to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), shifting funds away from pre-disaster preparation and implementing policies promoting outsourcing of relief efforts to private companies. With regards to Louisiana, FEMA denied Louisiana funding for pre-disaster preparation, which would provide the means for items that would better equip the local government for a hurricane. FEMA officials emphatically state that if FEMA were forewarned that cutting cost would result in a slow response times in cases of emergencies, which took place in the wake of the hurricane.

Although the federal government’s response and policies aided in this resulting tragedy, the local and state governments should not be left without responsibility. Although the Mayor had issued a mandatory evacuation of the city, given the economic background of much of New Orleans, citizens may of them did not have the means to evacuate. Why wasn’t there transportation provided? Moreover, there didn’t seem to be a well formulated “worst-case scenario” evacuation and rescue plan beyond the Superdome and the Convention Center, which would facilitate a more mellifluous process of communication between the state and local officials, and the citizens of New Orleans.

The brave citizens of New Orleans and the people of this nation want answers. We need to find out what went wrong on every level, so that we will be well equipped to efficiently handle another event like Hurricane Katrina and prevent something like this from happening in the future. I am in full support of an independent, bipartisan commission, similar to the 9/11 commission that would investigate and assess the efficacy of responses by each level of government. This commission would establish why leaders ignored urgent warnings that New Orleans would be destroyed if it sustained a direct hurricane hit. This body would assess why the notion that if a mass evacuation occurred, thousands would be left behind without any means of escape was ignored; and why the protective levees were not strengthened despite expert predictions that they would not withstand a major hurricane. In addition, the breakdown in communication and coordination between local, state and federal agencies urgently needs to be investigated, especially now that we are under constant threat of terrorist attacks.

Lastly, the actions of FEMA and its director Michael Brown who revealed his ineptitude and incoherence to the American people who appeared not to know that thousands of victims were stranded inside the New Orleans Convention Center, under deplorable conditions, despite reports about it on news broadcasts, must be thoroughly examined.