

Thirty-nine years ago my father put my sister and me and the family dog in the back seat of our car. My parents were in the front seat. Everything we owned was packed in a U-Haul that was connected to the back bumper of our car. We drove across country in the middle of the summer in an un-air conditioned car from upstate New York to California for my dad to get a job.

Before we got to California, we decided we would stop in Las Vegas for the night. We never left. The reason we never left is the day after we arrived in Las Vegas my dad joined the culinary union and the following day he got a job. He got a job as a waiter, which he kept for the next 33 years until he retired.

On a waiter's salary, on a union waiter's salary, my father made enough money to put a roof over our head, food on the table, clothes on our backs, and two daughters through college and law school; and the reason that he was able to do that is because of the fine wages that the unions had negotiated and fought for.

Because of the efforts of organized labor, so many doors of opportunity were opened to my family. No one has to convince me of the importance of unions in our country and the positive impact that they have on workers and business. I have had firsthand experience, and many of my fellow Nevadans have had the same experience.

Unions have had a significant impact on the city that my parents and my children and I call home. This is evident in the fact that Nevada has the highest percentage of workers that are union members in the country and our Nation's strongest economy. The culinary union Local 226 alone has more than 50,000 members and is the backbone of our community's service-oriented economy.

Las Vegas is the fastest growing metropolitan area in the country. Because of this incredible growth, the construction industry has exploded, and the building trades union members are helping to build our community. It is an oasis in the middle of the desert, thanks to them. Employers in southern Nevada recognize the importance of fostering partnerships with the unions. When workers make good wages, have good benefits and have good working conditions, productivity increases.

Southern Nevada's economy is booming and hardworking union men and women helped create this prosperity. I am proud of this strong organized labor movement in Nevada and the improvements that the unions have made for all workers.

Unions are the voice of working men and women in this country. Over the years, unions have worked to ensure that employees make liveable wages, work a 5-day workweek so they can spend time with their families, and receive overtime pay. Unions have fought and continue to fight to make sure that workers receive quality health care for themselves and their families.

Unions fight for families. Family-leave provisions allow parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, attend to sick family members or spend time with a newborn without the threat of losing their job. Through collective bargaining, unions have secured all of these benefits.

I am committed to protecting the right of our workers to both join unions and to collectively bargain, and I will fight against any attempt to erode these rights.

This country is far better off and a far better place to live and raise our families because of our unions and our right to organize. I commend the efforts of this Nation's hardworking men and women, and I pay tribute to them and organized labor today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE CITY OF HOUSTON IN RECOVERY AFTER TROPICAL STORM ALLISON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, on June 5, 2001, the storm of a lifetime, Tropical Storm Allison, hit the city of Houston and the surrounding areas. I rise today to pay tribute and to acknowledge the terrible loss that our community has suffered, the loss of some 21 individuals in our community; and whether or not the count is complete, we offer and I offer my deepest sympathy to all of those who have lost loved ones.

We know now that close to 17,000 residents of the city of Houston and surrounding areas have been impacted and have to be in shelters. But what we do know is that Houston has a can-do attitude, and we have drawn together as a community.

I am delighted that my colleagues from Texas will join me in a resolution congratulating all of those individuals who sacrificed and suffered, the ones who sacrificed to help with the rescue, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Houston Fire Department, the Houston Police Department, the various Red Cross workers and volunteers, and so many others who were just passing by and became a Good Samaritan.

It was a storm of a lifetime, because those who have lived in Houston all of their life have never seen such a storm, starting first on June 5, 2001, subsiding for a while, and then starting up with all of its fury in a couple of days. The downtown was under water, the Medical Center was under water, residential areas were under water, and people

everywhere were impacted. Freeways were shut down.

But that did not stop the mighty might of those who live in the greater Houston area. Mayor Lee P. Brown did an outstanding job of gathering the troops around and encouraging us to be able to accept our fate, but yet begin to recover.

Just this past Tuesday there was a Day of Prayer. As this hit, I was in the city and was able to engage with both the Mayor and the county judge as we surveyed the area. We are grateful for the Mayor's leadership in his letter to the Governor and the Governor's leadership, Governor Perry, in immediately contacting the White House, as we worked together in making contact with the White House and the President exercising his authority and declaring this a disaster area and in an expeditious time. We thank him.

At the same time, we thank those who withstood the storm. As I traveled throughout the district on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, as I traveled with the U.S. Coast Guard by helicopter and as well with the FEMA director, Joe Allbaugh, we all had one intent in mind, to immediately rescue and help those who were so devastated. There was a great deal of bravery, a great deal of heroism. The community did come together.

The recovery will be long. There are enormous challenges to overcome, and that is with the energy concern, the electricity concern, the telephone concern, the housing concern, the health concern, the school concern. Yes, the city has been impacted in so many ways, upwards of \$1 billion in damage. But what I can be gratified for is that there have been many efforts, corporate donations, FEMA on the ground, and the persistence of those of us who believe in helping, that we will press the point that these individuals will be able to overcome bureaucratic red tape and be declared recipients of funds that they truly need.

Let me thank my colleagues for their very kind remarks, and let me also acknowledge the various agencies like the IRS and other agencies that have noted the predicament of our community. I look forward to working with FEMA, ensuring that the reimbursement comes about.

I want to thank the Red Cross centers, the volunteer centers, Lakewood Church, Fondren Seventh Day Adventist Church, Kirby Middle School, all started by volunteers. The Sweet Home Baptist Church, the Sunnyside Multi-service, many of them initially manned by volunteers, and the Red Cross that came in subsequently. Although I know that they are not listening because they are focused on so many other important issues, let me thank them again.

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To the arts community of Houston, they are a viable part of your community. We will work with them. To the

downtown business community that has a number of the small business entrepreneurs who made our business community vibrant, we will work with them. To the media, we will thank and work with them continuously as they provide information throughout all of the community.

Likewise, I am delighted to be able to recognize the donation of Mr. George Foreman, a native Houstonian, of \$250,000, and of course a number of the corporations, as well. We will offer a resolution of appreciation, as well as assisting the community with any other support and legislative initiatives that may be brought about.

I want to thank the Harris County delegation for their leadership in this effort, and I hope that we will be able to recover together as a community united as one.

Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the work by thousands of Houstonians to recover in the wake of the disastrous flooding that inundated Southeast Texas and to remember those lives lost over the last several days due to this tragedy.

There has not been a complete accounting of all of those who have been reported missing in the Houston area, but there are already 21 deaths, which have been attributed directly to the flooding that occurred in the city. The death toll could have been much higher had it not been for the bravery and dedication of our city's fire fighters, law enforcement officers, public works crews, and emergency management personnel. I would like to also extend thanks and appreciation to those private citizens who rushed to the aid of fellow citizens who were in danger of succumbing to the floodwaters. These heroic individuals may not all be known, but the evidence of their caring and humanity is evident in the number of those who are reported to have been lost. These Houstonians used their personal boats and watercraft to rescue neighbors, friend, family and strangers from the rising floodwaters.

My appreciation also extends to those surrounding counties that provided assistance to residents of Houston, when the city was not able to respond due to the overwhelming numbers of request.

The catastrophic flooding has left 17,000 resident of the City of Houston and surrounding area in desperate need of emergency shelter, this is in addition to the sizable Houston homeless population. Across Harris County Texas it is estimated that as many as 21,000 homes are thought to be without power, phones, and water, with about 5,000 homes having been flooded.

Reliant Energy/HL&P reported that 34,000 of their customers, who included hospitals, were without power during the flooding.

The medical personal of Memorial Herman Hospital are to be commended for their quick action to move patients to safer ground when the hospital was threatened by floodwaters. Memorial Herman Hospital is a level 1-trauma center and transplant center with multiple levels of adult, pediatric and neonatal intensive-care capabilities. The flood forced the hospital to suspend service on Saturday, and move all of its patients to safety.

I would like to thank our fellow Americans for rushing to the aid of the residents of the

City of Houston. I would like to remind us all how important it is to offer assistance to those in distress due to natural or man made disasters. Therefore, I thank President Bush for acting quickly to declare Southeast Texas a federal disaster area. The City of Houston is estimated to have a billion dollars in damage as a result of the flood.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has also recognized the enormity of the flood in our area by providing an automatic extension from the June 15 deadline for filing or paying taxes to August 15 of this year. I thank the Director of the IRS for allowing this additional time for Houston area residents.

The flood and its severity were exacerbated by the fact that land in and around the Houston area has been subsidence of land. Many report that the area around the Medical Center area had subsided about 2 feet from 1973 to 1995. New data on subsidence in the Houston area is due to come out at the end of this month, according to the National Geodetic Survey office.

The floods economic impact to the area may be difficult to assess. There are an estimated 76,000 ATM bank machines that were effected by the flood, which may have implications for 22 states. The Pulse ATM network reported that the flood disrupted transactions when the primary and secondary power supplies was flooded in Houston. This led to the forced closing of the Bush Intercontinental Airport, suspension of Metro bus service, the flooding of major highways into and out of the city, such as I-10, Highway 59, I-45, parts of the 610 Loop, have all had a tremendous impact on the city's business community.

Houston is in recovery due to the efforts of thousands of public servants, businesses, and individual efforts. I would like to commend and thank the Houston Chronicle and KHOU-TV (Channel 11) for leading an effort which has raised almost \$6 million to aid the Red Cross' massive relief effort. Those stations that also joined in this effort are KPRC-TV (Channel 2), KRIV-TV (Channel 26), KTMD-TV (Channel 48), KLN-TV (Channel 45), and KRBE-FM (104.1).

Clear Channel Communications reported more than \$30,000 in donations and 50 to 60 truckloads of supplies, and businesses and organizations contributed \$353,000, with \$100,000 of this amount coming from Calpine Corporation.

Former heavyweight boxing champion Mr. George Foreman, a native Houstonian, donated \$250,000 to this effort.

Furthermore, I will work with local, state, and federal governments to ensure that Houston has the resources necessary to make a full recovery from the floods. I will investigate the severity of this flood and evaluate methods that can be put into place to prevent another tragedy of the magnitude from happening again.

I thank my colleagues for their support during this difficult time.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, I have taken this hour under the leadership's prerogatives this evening in order to address three related subjects. I will be joined, I am sure, by some of my colleagues who also have something to say about these subjects because of their recent involvement in a meeting.

First of all, I would like to spend some time talking about the NATO Parliamentary Assembly; second, relatedly, about the subject of NATO expansion, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion; and third, about two of nine applicant countries, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

It has been my privilege to participate in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, formerly known as the North Atlantic Assembly, since 1984 on a rather regular basis. Since 1995, I have had the opportunity to chair the House delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

This organization, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, has now been in existence and operating efficiently and I think quite effectively for more than 40 years, first for the 12 countries of the NATO Alliance, later expanded to 16, and now 19 members.

Congress participates as a result of a statutory decision which provides for participation for both the House and Senate and bipartisan delegations that meet with our European and Canadian allies in NATO, their parliamentarians semi-annually, and in fact a third meeting that involves part of the assembly which takes place in Brussels in February, where we meet not only with our colleagues from the NATO countries but also with officials of NATO, the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary General of NATO, and more recently, with the European Union and some of its components, like the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Without a doubt, the NATO organization, NATO, has been the most effective collective defense alliance in the history of the world. It has provided the collective security to those nations of Western Europe, and it is no surprise that many countries of the former Warsaw Pact now aspire to membership not only to the European Union but to NATO itself.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly has provided a forum for discussion, for dialogue, for research by the parliamentarians of the 16, now 19, NATO countries. It is by, all accounts, the most substantive of all of the inter-parliamentary efforts in which the House and Senate are involved.

The members of the delegation from the House and from the Senate are chosen by the leadership on both sides of the aisle to participate in this assembly, and we have always proceeded in a bipartisan fashion.

Our comments tonight are prompted by the fact that we have recently returned from one of our semiannual meetings. This one was in Vilnius, Lithuania.