

hurricane season, from the month of June through at least September or October. Throughout the Nation, because of the differences in weather and, of course, the potential of global warming, we have had erratic weather activities.

We, in Houston, a couple of weeks ago, experienced that with Tropical Storm Allison with the fall of 36 inches of rain that fell in our area in a 24-hour period. That caused an enormous amount of damage, some 5,000 homes damaged, water to the roof levels of many of our residential areas, and a whole litany of damage that was not expected.

For example, we noted that the medical center, one of the prized medical centers of this Nation, suffered about \$2 billion in damage, and that number is growing. In touring that site, we saw the enormous impact in research, in hospital beds, in emergency facilities that were lost.

Additionally, in the 18th Congressional District, which I represent, St. Joseph's Hospital, which is a pivotal hospital in the downtown community, the downtown business community, with thousands and thousands of employees, lost its level-three emergency center, which is still not open. In a tour that I took this last week, 154 patient beds were lost, as was their kitchen facilities, able to serve not only patients but employees, and, as I indicated, not only their emergency trauma unit, which leaves the downtown business community without a nearby trauma unit for emergency purposes, but also research and other laboratory facilities. Gone.

In addition to the medical centers of St. Joseph Hospital, we have found that the academic institutions, which are about to start to be opened, and the secondary schools in our public school systems, have been damaged. And, in addition, major damage has confronted our universities.

I toured the University of Houston. At that time they thought their damage was about \$100 million. Now it is rising to \$250 million, and insurance is way under \$100 million. In looking at that damage, I noted precious resources, such as books, research facilities, school classrooms, equipment, and teacher offices were damaged.

Texas Southern University, which is about to begin its mitigation process, likewise has an enormous amount of damage in their law library as well as the various buildings that have been impacted by the damage, mostly in the basement levels.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these issues because I think it would be foolish for this House to debate and play around with the needs of the American citizens. Houston may not be the only place that will suffer some sort of weather damage and some sort of catastrophe that warrants the intervention of FEMA. Right now, my district has a number of FEMA representatives and offices around the community try-

ing to work with those who have been devastated not only physically and property-wise but also psychologically.

I was appalled that we would stand on the floor of the House and actually debate cutting FEMA. My understanding is that we are trying to submit additional dollars into the VA-HUD bill for FEMA. And that is not only for Houston, Texas, but may be for other disasters that we certainly do not wish for but may happen. But the dilemma is the administration has not seen fit, along with FEMA, to stand up and request the dollars, to work with us in Congress to acknowledge that their funds are depleted.

I recall very vividly when we were on the floor debating and arguing against cutting FEMA that I had an amendment to add those monies back in, and we were then being told that FEMA had \$1 billion in its account. Twenty-four hours after that debate, we were told that, in actuality, they only had \$178 million and, in fact, even 24 hours later maybe that would be gone. We in Texas had to request that our matching dollars be lessened to 10 percent and that FEMA would pay up to 90 percent.

We are now in the midst of trying to rebuild lives. In fact, our local community agencies have come together to give washing machines and refrigerators and other necessities. In addition, I have been able to secure matching monies totaling \$4 million from one of our utility companies, Reliant, to be able to add dollars for people who have been displaced because of the damage, and also compounded by the enormous heat that we face in Houston.

This is time now, Mr. Speaker, for us to gather together, to take the smoke and mirrors away, to stand on the floor of the House and work for the monies for FEMA, but as well for the administration to be able to stand up and request these dollars so that all America can be protected in the time of disaster.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested.

S. 180. An act to facilitate famine relief efforts and a comprehensive solution to the war in Sudan.

PAYING RESPECT TO SERGEANT STARNES

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

Mr. KERNS. Mr. Speaker, last weekend, we laid to rest an officer killed in the line of duty in Martinsville, Indiana. Today, I come to the floor of the House to pay respect to this brave officer, Sergeant Daniel Starnes. Sergeant

Starnes was taken from us after struggling 27 days to recover from infections caused by four gunshot wounds.

His death has brought the Martinsville community to its knees. Because of the dedication and the courage of men and women in law enforcement, like Sergeant Starnes, all too often we take for granted our family's safety and the safety of our police officers. It is through their commitment to serve and protect us that we have peace of mind and a sense of security. We must also always remember that behind the badge is a human being. Sergeant Starnes was more than just a model law enforcement officer, he was a husband and a father and a friend to so many, and his loss weighs heavy on us all.

Over this past weekend, thousands of law enforcement officers from across Indiana and our great Nation turned out to honor Sergeant Starnes. And while his death has shocked people in Morgan County and throughout Indiana, it has also brought the community together in an outpouring of support and love for the Starnes family and those in law enforcement who put their lives on the line each day.

During the funeral procession through town, people lined the streets with either their head bowed, their hand over their heart, or flying an American flag to pay respect. During such a difficult time, it was uplifting to know that the community cared and demonstrated its respect for Sergeant Starnes and his fellow officers.

Today, our thoughts and prayers are with the Starnes family, the Morgan County Sheriff's Department, and the entire Morgan County community for their loss. While words alone may not console Sergeant Starnes' family and friends, I hope that the knowledge that he is now with Our Father in heaven gives us some comfort and gives them comfort as well.

During times like these, it is only natural to ask why, why do we have to lose such an outstanding person and an officer? While I cannot begin to answer such questions, I can only say that I find collective strength in my faith, and I pray that God grants the Starnes family and their friends both comfort and strength during this time of mourning.

DEBT RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, this coming weekend, from July 20 to July 22, President George W. Bush will be meeting with the heads of government at the G-8 Summit in Genoa, Italy, to discuss international economic issues. I urge the President to support the complete cancellation of the debts that the world's poorest countries owe the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, referred to as HIPC, was developed in 1999 to provide debt relief to the world's poorest countries. The HIPC Initiative requires countries to invest the savings from debt relief in HIV-AIDS treatment and prevention, health care, education, and poverty reduction programs.

Unfortunately, the IMF and the World Bank have not provided their fair share of debt relief. While the United States agreed to cancel 100 percent of the debts owed by poor countries, the IMF and the World Bank have agreed to reduce these countries' debts by less than half. As a result, the countries that have begun to receive debt relief have seen their debt payments reduced by an average of only 27 percent. Most of these countries are still spending more money on debt payments than they are on health care.

Zambia provides an excellent illustration of what is wrong with the approach of the IMF and the World Bank. Zambia is a deeply impoverished country with a per capita income of only \$330. The infant mortality rate exceeds 1 percent of live births, and 27 percent of Zambian children under 5 are malnourished. Zambia has also been ravaged by the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Almost 10 percent of the population is infected with the AIDS virus and 650,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS.

AIDS has also ravaged the educational system by causing a shortage of trained teachers. Yet Zambia's debt payments have actually increased following the receipt of debt relief. Moreover, Zambia spends more than twice as much money on debt payments as it does on health care.

How can the International Monetary Fund tell countries like Zambia to use savings from debt relief for poverty reduction when the IMF knows there is no savings?

On April 26, 2001, I introduced H.R. 1642, the Debt Cancellation for the New Millennium Act. This bill would require the IMF and the World Bank to provide complete cancellation of 100 percent of the debts owed to them by all 32 impoverished countries that are expected to qualify for the HIPC Initiative. The bill would also allow three additional impoverished countries, Bangladesh, Haiti, and Nigeria, to participate in the HIPC Initiative. Furthermore, the bill would prohibit the imposition of user fees for education and health services and other structural adjustment programs as conditions for debt relief. Seventy-six Members of Congress representing both political parties have cosponsored this bill.

The IMF and the World Bank have sufficient resources to completely wipe away poor countries' debts. It is time for the IMF and the World Bank to do their share to make debt relief a reality for poor countries and their people. It is time for the IMF and the World Bank to allow these countries to invest their resources in health, education, and the elimination of poverty.

I urge President Bush and the world leaders who attend the G-8 summit to tell the IMF and the World Bank to completely cancel 100 percent of the debts of the world's most impoverished countries once and for all.

ELECTION REFORM

(Ms. WATSON of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON of California. Mr. Speaker, it has now been almost 9 months since the election fiasco of the year 2000, and for 9 months America's leaders have talked about election reform, but little has been done.

This week yet another report was released detailing the breakdown of our voting process in America. A joint study by CalTech and MIT found that 4 to 6 million Americans lost their right to vote because of outdated or faulty voting equipment and a flawed process.

This might come as a shock to some people, but it should not. Last week my colleagues and I on the House Committee on Government Reform released another study detailing the same problem. Too many Americans are forced to use outdated or faulty voting equipment and too many of these faulty machines are concentrated in the communities of the poor and minority voters.

Mr. Speaker, we have had 9 months of study, 9 months of research, 9 months of reports. Now the American people want and deserve action. Mr. Speaker, please make election reform the number one priority of this House in time to make real lasting changes before next year's election.

BRINGING SOCIAL SECURITY INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today the scare tactics began. A year ago today we had in hand a Social Security Trustees' report that was actually kind of optimistic. Things were looking up for the system. The day in which it would not be able to pay 100 percent of benefits was put off until the year 2039. That is, Social Security had in hand, under conservative estimates, enough money from our taxes, from the taxes of working people, not the wealthy, because they do not pay on any income over \$80,000, but the working people had put enough money in the trust fund to secure it through the year 2039.

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No question. After that, with no changes, under pessimistic assumptions, it would only be able to pay 73 percent of the benefits. But here comes the Bush administration and the so-called Bipartisan Commission on Social Security loaded with people who have been trying to destroy the sys-

tem, including, sadly, a couple of Members of the House and Senate who are ostensibly Democrats for more than a quarter of a century. They are doing the work of Wall Street.

Wall Street cannot wait to mandate that individuals put money into individual accounts. When they can charge 250 million people a little bit of money to maintain accounts, they make tens of billions of dollars. Guess where the tens of billions of dollars comes from? It comes from future benefits that people would have realized under the current system.

This document is extraordinary in that it echoes Treasury Secretary O'Neill. It says that the United States government might not honor the trillions of dollars of obligations it has in special bonds to the Social Security Trust Fund. They are saying the crisis starts the day Social Security has to begin drawing on the funds, the savings we have put aside for our retirement.

The Bush administration is questioning whether the full faith and credit of the United States government will be delivered on those debts, those obligations. If that is true, everybody around the world and across the United States better begin cashing in their Treasury bonds. If the United States Treasury in 2016 under the leadership of President Bush and Secretary O'Neill does not put the full faith and credit of our government behind those depository instruments, money that we, the working people, have paid into the Treasury for our retirement, then we are in bigger trouble than I thought.

Mr. Speaker, this is an unbelievable distortion of the facts. There is a simple solution to the Social Security problem, but we will not hear it from this administration or Secretary O'Neill who is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, or President Bush who is worth tens of millions of dollars, because it would require that they pay the same amount as every other American. They would rather talk about defaulting on the obligations of the Federal Treasury to honor Social Security Trust Funds than talk about the easiest way to solve this problem: Make every American pay the same amount of Social Security tax on every dollar they earn. They consider that a radical proposal.

If that one simple step were taken, if we lifted that cap, if people who earned over \$80,000, that small percentage of the people, if they paid in the same Social Security that a minimum wage earner pays, a flat tax, I hear from the other side of the aisle, give us a flat tax. When I suggested this to the Republican chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, he almost had a stroke. Oh, no, not a real flat tax. We are talking about a flat tax that cuts taxes on the wealthy, not a flat tax that would give them the same obligation to pay as working people.

If we took that one step, Social Security under current assumptions would