

give tax breaks to the rich. That is their agenda, and they push it through over and over again. I really hope the American people will give us some help in the next election.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4571, LAWSUIT ABUSE REDUCTION ACT OF 2004

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-684) on the resolution (H. Res. 766) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4571) to amend rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to improve attorney accountability, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HURRICANE SEASON

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, since the early weeks of August, Florida and its residents have endured the unrelenting and unsympathetic wrath of Mother Nature. Through the harsh design of fate, Florida was dealt the unfortunate circumstances of bearing the brunt of not one but two hurricanes, and it appears more dark clouds are poised to visit the Sunshine State.

This map very carefully tracks the two hurricanes that hit Florida. The first one in orange is Hurricane Charley. It was upgraded to a tropical storm at 5 on August 10, continued raising havoc in Jamaica, and in Jamaica it became a hurricane on the 11th, and it hit Punta Gorda, Florida on the 13th, exactly one month ago today, at 4:30 p.m.

Frances became a category 4 on the 28th of August. On the 2nd, it was in the Bahamas, and Frances made landfall in Stewart, Florida, at 1 on September 5. So Florida has been hit twice and based on the latest weather forecast, it appears that the Panhandle will be hit again with Hurricane Ivan.

It is not the first time that Florida has been devastated by three hurricanes all at once. The State has experienced such occurrences before. Actually in 1964, three storms hit Florida within an 8-week period. The hurricanes were named Cleo, Dora and Isabel. Regardless of what we name them, it does not make living in a State with so many hurricanes a lot of fun. Those hurricanes slammed the State. Thus, Floridians are not bewildered by the sheer numbers of hurricanes that threaten to trounce the State.

With regard to the power and force of these menacing natural disasters, well,

before Hurricane Charley came ashore the people of Florida have understood and respected the potential power that a hurricane wields. I recall in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew hit the State, and it hit the Homestead, Florida, area and had a devastating effect there.

We have a few photos of some of the examples of the kind of destruction that a hurricane can do. Obviously this house as a result of the hurricane was damaged and would have to be completely torn down. Again, we have more destruction. This is an area that certainly as we look at the picture we say, how could people go back and say I want to rebuild. But wanting to rebuild and having the courage and the strength that so many Floridians do to face the hurricane and the destruction that goes along with the hurricane and yet have the spirit, the human spirit that says we are going to stay, we are going to rebuild and make the community even stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER) from the Orlando area.

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from Florida where I took a helicopter tour of the greater Orlando area and saw firsthand the extensive damage which has literally turned upside down the lives of several hundred Central Floridians. I have empathy for those who have suffered such severe damage because my own mom, Laura Keller, completely lost her home in Hurricane Charley.

Despite these temporary heartaches, I am optimistic about central Florida's future. Last Tuesday, we passed legislation in Congress to immediately provide \$2 billion to FEMA to help our citizens in Florida recover from Hurricanes Charley and Frances. The very next day, President Bush signed this legislation into law. Together we acted with near-lightning speed to provide immediate relief. This \$2 billion will be able to help Central Florida families with things like temporary lodging, food, water supplies, medical care, and will allow roofs to be repaired. I know that I speak for all central Floridians when I say to my congressional colleagues all across the country, thank you for being there and voting for this important relief package.

But after taking this helicopter tour, I can tell Members this \$2 billion we have already provided is only a down payment, and I say that regretfully because I know how tight money is around here these days. Fortunately, President Bush agrees more money is needed. Earlier today the White House requested that Congress provide an additional \$2.5 billion in hurricane relief for Florida. I will strongly support this much-needed appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, our citizens have suffered enormous out-of-pocket costs which should be taken into account by FEMA. For example, imagine that a person has a \$300,000 home and he has

suffered \$30,000 in property damage as a result of these two hurricanes. Now some people outside of Florida may mistakenly think no problem, you have insurance, insurance will pay for it.

Actually, it is a big problem and here is why. Since many of these Florida insurance policies have 5 percent deductibles and these two hurricanes are viewed by insurance companies as two separate and distinct events, it is entirely possible that the individual will have to pay the entire \$30,000 bill himself, 100 percent out of pocket. I believe in this type of circumstance, if the person is not eligible for a FEMA grant, he should at least get a zero percent loan from FEMA to cover the out-of-pocket cost. It is patently unreasonable for us to assume that the average citizen has \$30,000 lying around in his checking account just in case he unexpectedly gets blind-sided by two hurricanes.

Mr. Speaker, these people need help, and it is up to those of us in Congress to try to help them. Rest assured that Congress, especially those from Florida, will continue to work very closely with President Bush and Governor Jeb Bush over the next few weeks to help rebuild Florida as quickly as possible and in a way that makes Florida stronger than ever before.

I urge all of my colleagues in Congress to support this \$2.5 billion hurricane relief package. It is the right thing to do and now is the right time to do it.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned Hurricane Andrew, and Hurricane Andrew came around the fall of 1992 when I was just elected to the Florida Senate. I served at the time with the very distinguished gentleman now in Congress with me, the gentleman from the Palm Beach, Florida, area (Mr. FOLEY).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for organizing this opportunity for us to come to the floor and let the rest of the country know what Florida has been living through.

I came to Florida from Massachusetts at the age of 3, and I remember waking up early one morning in 1960 to a storm that we had never known in Massachusetts, and that was Hurricane Donna. We went about putting masking tape on our jalousie windows. That is what we were told to do for safety. My, how things have changed.

The people of Florida are storm weary and they are fatigued. Their resilient nature and strong character have been tested over the last few weeks. But as we have done before, Floridians are banding together, helping their neighbor and slowly rebuilding their homes, their businesses and their communities.

Never in our Nation's history have two storms brought this much destruction back to back to one State. Unfortunately, the people of the 16th District have weathered the worst. Hurricane Charley reached landfall on August 13, 2004, and blasted its way

through southwest Florida with winds of upwards of 145 miles an hour and 10-foot storm surges.

This is Hurricane Charley as it originated off the African coast. It was upgraded along the way, became a very, very distinguished storm in intensity. We heard it would probably go to Tampa. I can remember watching that storm at 3 in the afternoon in West Palm Beach, my home, and watched as that storm made almost a right-hand turn into Punta Gorda and increased in velocity and intensity.

That was a Friday afternoon at 4:30. At 7 a.m., Governor Bush and FEMA Director Mike Brown and I hit the tarmac at Fort Myers airport to begin a very telling and shocking look, an aerial observation of death and destruction. It is hard for anyone to quantify the feeling you have when you watch somebody who is about 80 years old walking out of a totally destroyed mobile home park with nothing more than a pair of white dress shoes. That was all she could find. I watched that repeated home after home in beautiful Punta Gorda, Florida, never before known to many, now known to all. The names Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte have been replayed on every national news broadcast as the scene of just total and complete devastation.

□ 2115

Hurricane Frances reached landfall 3 weeks later on September 4, 2004, and battered Florida's East Coast and central region with 105-mile-per-hour winds and up to 17 inches of rain. Again another storm, I must tell you, coming from a similar track and a similar trajectory, coming towards us at quite a bit of speed. Fortunately it started to slow as it approached the Bahama chain and clearly then stalled off of West Palm. I remember watching from the emergency operations center at West Palm as that storm seemed to set there for an incredible amount of time. It finally made landfall again in the 16th District in Sewells Point, Florida, which is located in Martin County close to the city of Stuart, and proceeded to do damage and destruction as it virtually made an X across Orlando. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. FEENEY) will be talking a little bit about how it impacted his district, which has Brevard and I believe Osceola and Orange Counties, but he will tell you how it basically made an X over Orlando as if they were charted and plotted to take that trajectory.

Twenty-seven people lost their lives from the wrath of Hurricane Charley to date. Eighteen people lost their lives from the devastation caused by Frances. Insured property losses for Charley are climbing in excess of \$7 billion. Hurricane Frances damages are estimated up to \$4 billion. More than 20,000 farms were in the path of Hurricane Frances and damage estimated to Florida's agricultural community exceeds more than \$2 billion. The travel and tourism industry faces millions of

dollars in lost revenue. Power outages have affected more than 6 million people and, boy, have we heard it. At times I felt like I was the service representative for the power company, we had so many calls coming to our office. Believe me, I understand your aggravation because I too was without power for a significant part of last week.

Florida's Governor Jeb Bush took immediate action to declare a major disaster for the entire State of Florida and deployed necessary resources to deal with the crisis. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, has more than 2,700 agency workers helping with the recovery effort. The National Guard was quick to mobilize more than 4,100 troops to help in the relief efforts, both to provide security for people in the region as well as provide humanitarian relief for those impacted. \$2 billion has been requested and granted thanks to the hard work of the Florida delegation, including its chairman, Mr. BILL YOUNG, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Chairman CLAY SHAW of the entire delegation, and \$2.5 billion of emergency moneys is now being forwarded to this Chamber by the White House.

Some reforms are in the process. We filed a bill that would allow one-time penalty free withdrawals from IRA accounts for people living in natural disaster areas. We have asked for the potential halting of cement tariffs so we can quickly rebuild our communities. We have asked to consider the insurance disaster relief reserve accounts that we think would stabilize and make insurance companies more financially sound to weather these storms and the burdens they place on those companies' reserves, regional emergency energy reserves to look at the coordination between Federal-State agencies bringing fuel supplies to regions most impacted to run the diesels, the power, the waste treatment plants, and, of course, to review our energy repair efforts after a disaster.

And now Ivan is somewhere stirring in the coast and we are praying, I have prayed more in the last 4 days than I did in 10 years of Catholic school, hoping that Ivan would not do the destruction that was contemplated just several days ago. We pray for all those in the Panhandle. Our colleague JEFF MILLER and I were speaking today and worried about its potential impact on the Panhandle, of course, New Orleans, any of those areas. We just hope maybe the storm loses its steam and subsides. But you see now why Florida and even areas in Virginia were hit by hurricanes.

But I just want to thank again my colleague from Florida for providing this opportunity to kind of let people know how difficult it has been the last 5 weeks in Florida but how strong the people have been and how I know with the help of the Federal Government and our colleagues in this Chamber that we will do our best to remedy. We will not be able to right every wrong or

every problem people have suffered, but we are certainly going to work on trying to make their lives at least better as we prepare to deal with these back-to-back tragedies.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. We both had experiences both with Hurricane Andrew and these hurricanes that we have had this year. I have noticed a marked improvement in FEMA and with the coordination of FEMA and the State agencies. Having been involved and had people who suffered through both of those hurricanes, I see a much more rapid response on the part of FEMA this time. I know that is exactly what is happening in the Tampa Bay area and I am sure it is happening in your area. If you would like to take just a moment to address that, I would appreciate it.

Mr. FOLEY. It is interesting you mention that, because last night I saw Joe Allbaugh, who was the former FEMA Director under President Bush, the first FEMA Director under this administration. He told me how President Bush during his term as Governor had suffered 14 hurricanes in Texas over the course of those 3 years. One of the things they talked about is the plan that they put in place to rapidly position rescue efforts, relief efforts, water, ice and other things in staging areas so that we would not repeat the tragedies of years past, Andrew being one of them, where it was a week before even then Governor Chiles asked for even Federal help.

So it is interesting as we watched particularly in Charley, if I can take you for a minute to that day, Saturday, when we were aerial above the community. Hundreds of trucks moving in on the highways. Very little other traffic. But these relief trucks were already there. The winds had only stopped blowing a few hours before and they were making their way into Florida to try and remedy the damage. I know we have not got everything right. There are still some kinks, but the difference in the way they have approached restoration of basic utilities, of water, of the basic provisions, including two visits by President Bush to Florida, helping hand out supplies himself. We are all touched by these storms and we cannot work miracles, but I can tell you and I thank you for bringing that to the attention of our colleagues, because FEMA and its response through its lead agent, Mike Brown, has been tireless, relentless and has been thorough. I salute them because they are under a lot of pressure, as you can well imagine. Constituents are upset, mad, aggravated, tired, hot. Every emotion you could possibly have has been felt in Florida. But FEMA really has stepped up to the plate.

The other person is Governor Bush. You have got to give him credit. I have known Jeb probably since 1982, when he was a Secretary of Commerce, a young real estate lad in Florida and now obviously our esteemed Governor. I do not think he has taken his eye off the ball

once in the last 5 weeks. It has been an incredibly focused effort, hourly updates. You cannot imagine what I BlackBerry him about. I am wondering when I am going to get the BlackBerry back fully. Take a nap. But he responds. He is getting the problem solved. It has been a very, very wonderful thing to watch. And he does not have an election before him. He is in his second term. He cannot run for reelection. The kind of effort he is putting through, I have heard a few people say, oh, it's all politics. He is not running for anything. He is finished. He has done his two terms. He is working hard on behalf of the people because he feels their pain. And he was in Andrew. He was in Miami at the time. He remembers the lack of response and he is not going to let that be repeated to the citizens of this great State.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Without a doubt, there has been rapid response. Part of the redesign of FEMA is that they have so many people on standby, whether it is a retired nurse or a doctor who will take time off to go exactly where they are needed. We must always remember, too, that the National Guard has been of great assistance. I know they have been in several of the counties that I represent. As I went around the counties, people are saying it is much better organized. If I could wave a magic wand, just as you have said this, too, wave a magic wand and have everybody's power put on, but we do not want to have those power companies out there endangering the lives of their crew either. This is difficult sometimes for people to realize. Nobody likes to be in the dark sitting there by candlelight but overall between FEMA and all of the mutual assistance that came in from the other States from utility companies, it was a much more rapid response, much better coordinated.

I agree with you that our Governor has done a wonderful job. He is there at the emergency operations center up there in Tallahassee, he has toured around the State. I know we have been in touch with him about some snafus. Between FEMA and Governor Bush, the problems get resolved very quickly.

Mr. FOLEY. Let me expand on one thing, if I could. You mentioned the persons that are part-timers. That is a very significant new part of FEMA. From around this great country of ours, there are people standing ready in reserve, that have other jobs, other lives. They may be firefighters, nurses. You mentioned those trades. They are ready to receive the call at a moment's notice. A bag is already packed in their home. They get the call. I met several of them in Punta Gorda. They are coming from Oregon, Washington State, Texas, you name it. These are people that give up 2 weeks of their own lives to come help, aid and assist, not as a volunteer, they are paid for their 2 weeks, but they leave their own homes to come provide the relief, which

means the Federal Government does not have to have all these full-time employees.

That was one of the most incredible things I had seen. They had set up a MASH unit in the parking lot because we lost all three hospitals in Punta Gorda. Those people were in there that were medical doctors, surgeons that came from their communities to give their 2 weeks. It is just one of those things that you realize we are not in this world alone no matter what problems we face. This country rises to the challenge and the people that are part of this great Nation are up to the challenge of remedying whatever is thrown in our way.

I want to thank the gentlewoman for the chance to discuss, and I know our good colleague from Florida (Mr. FEENEY) is here. I thank the gentlewoman for the opportunity to be part of the special order tonight.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I thank the gentleman for being here. I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Orlando (Mr. FEENEY).

Mr. FEENEY. I thank the gentlewoman for organizing this hour and our colleague from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) whose district really took the brunt of both the one-two punch from hurricanes one and two. My district fortunately is a little bit more inland for the most part although I represent from Kennedy Space Center up to Daytona Beach on the beach. We also got hit with a one-two punch. By the time the storm hit us, it was significantly diluted from, say, where the first storm hit Punta Gorda but it was still significant. We got hurt bad. We had people without power for a week. We had an enormous amount of damage done, trees and debris all over, kids lost a week of school. But what is remarkable as you live through the awesome fury of Mother Nature is how resilient the people of Florida and their leaders have been in this response to these two disasters that have really hurt us very badly.

I want to share an experience. One of the things that I did after the first hurricane is to take a little tour with our sheriff of Orange County, Sheriff Kevin Beary. Senator BILL NELSON joined us on that tour with some other local public officials. I will never forget going to a mobile home area that had been mandatorily evacuated, but there was a gentleman that decided to send his family out. He was going to ride out the storm. Within the first 5 minutes of 130, 120-mile-an-hour winds, the entire roof of his mobile home blew off. Within the next 5 minutes, most of the walls had blown off. He only survived the storm because he was able to take all of the food out of his refrigerator and pull the door shut. I guarantee you by the time Frances came around, that same gentleman had evacuated what was left of his mobile home.

One of the lessons that we have learned is that if people will listen to their leaders as a disaster comes

through, we are getting much better at predicting the path of hurricanes. Obviously they change their minds at the last minute and you can never know for sure, but it is an enormous amount of help in a State like Florida. We have got only a couple of major arteries, transportation arteries and interstates that people can evacuate on. If everybody from Palm Beach, Broward and Dade County decided to leave within the same 2 hours, we would have nothing but a parking lot for a week on I-95, for example. What we have learned to do is evacuate in stages as our intelligence becomes better and because of that, we are talking about tens of billions of dollars lost, but thankfully we are not talking about thousands or even hundreds of lives lost in large part because of our great Governor Jeb Bush and the leadership he has shown. We can eventually clean up the streets, the debris, we can rebuild the buildings and we can replace most of the property that has been lost over time.

We will rebuild a healthy, thriving, economic Florida, although it will take time but obviously if you make a decision that costs you your life, that is a decision you can never recover from. The casualties given the awesome fury that these storms have invoked on Florida so far have been thankfully, and we thank the Lord for this, have been thankfully relatively minor, especially considering some of the storms in the past.

One of the great things that we have learned to do at the National Hurricane Center is to do a much better job in long-term forecasts, meaning 4- or 5-day forecasts in terms of where these hurricanes are going. It is the reason that we can plan, it is the reason we can evacuate, it is the reason we can board up the proper pieces of property. It is the reason that we can get people into safety. It is the reason that we can get supplies in before the storm hits rather than waiting for weeks afterwards. It has obviously saved not only a lot of lives, but it has done a great job in reducing the property destruction and it has stopped aggravating an already frustrated group of Floridians throughout the State in virtually every county that has been touched one way or another by this incredible storm.

□ 2130

The 5-day forecast is run out of the Naval Operations Center in Norfolk, and they have done a terrific job in making sure that we can define as narrowly as possible which areas are most likely to be hit by the storm. And as Craig Fugate, the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, observed, "All Floridians should welcome the increased awareness that the 5-day forecast has provided." We are grateful for that.

The other thing that I did immediately after the storm was to call the sheriffs in our area. I happened to be at the Emergency Operations Center in

Tallahassee on 9/11, the day the terrorists attacked. I spent that day as the Speaker of the House of Florida with Governor Jeb Bush and other leaders as we made decisions about how to respond to attacks that we did not know when they would end. We did not know whether Florida might be a target as well that morning on 9/11.

But what I learned there that day is, all of the private agencies, from Red Cross and other charitable organizations, from the Federal agencies, including FEMA, from all of our departments at the State level, transportation, health, we have learned remarkably to respond in a regional and Statewide way to disasters that heretofore, before Andrew, were really thought to be a local problem by and large.

And it is the remarkable coordination by all levels of Government and agencies within the Government that not only hopefully will help us with these nature-ordained disasters but will help us deter and respond, if we ever should need to, to manmade attacks, namely terrorism.

I want to tell the Members that FEMA has done a much better job, as the gentlewoman was just saying with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY). In the aftermath of Andrew, we had literally weeks where we did not have certain equipment, certain supplies, certain emergency necessities.

In this situation, that has not been the case, with the exception of power. In some cases, we have had people down for a week or two without power. That is an enormously challenging, frustrating, maddening experience. I can tell my colleagues when it is 110 degrees outside, and the kids are hot, and they do not have the ability to go anywhere, to relax, to take a cool shower, it is very difficult to function.

But with the exception of power, we have had, within a day or two for the most part, gas supplies back up and running. We have been able to get the debris cleared up in the roads so people could get to and from their shopping centers to buy fresh food, to replenish supplies. So the response in Central Florida has really been amazing.

Already FEMA assistance in Florida has reached more than \$162 million as of today. Approximately \$100 million of that is in emergency housing, people that literally would not have any shelter if it was not for the work of FEMA. Everywhere I went, my sheriffs, my local law enforcement, my local fire chiefs, my local mayors and county commissioners all remarked that FEMA was giving them everything that was humanly possible to provide in a fairly organized and reasonable manner, and they were very grateful.

One of the issues that has already been touched on by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER) when he was first here was, in the aftermath of Andrew, we had really had a crisis. We had 11 property and casualty, i.e. homeowners' insurance, go bankrupt. Even

State Farm in Florida literally went belly up. And only because of the good graces of the other 49 State Farms in the various States decided to bail out the State Farm program were they able to pay claims and stay in business.

If, in Florida, we lost all of our property and casualty market, that is, if insurers no longer wanted to write homeowners' insurance policies, Americans everywhere need to be aware of what the effect would be on Florida's economy and ultimately on the United States' economy.

The truth of the matter is that real estate is one of our key economic drivers in Florida. We do not have a big manufacturing base like many States in the Midwest, for example. But we have an awful lot of thriving commercial and homeownership in the real estate area, and it is one of the things that drives not just the Florida economy but ripples and has a positive effect on the entire U.S. economy.

If we do not have the ability to have insurance, lenders will not lend to buy property. Not only will the lenders and the mortgage brokers and mortgage bankers go out of business, but the people that work for title companies will go out of business. People that build houses, subcontractors, people that build pools, people that sell lumber, people that survey property, we would literally have dozens of industries wiped out potentially for a significant period of time.

As a consequence, we did a couple of things that were very important. It is the reason, after two horrible storms, the Florida insurance property and casualty market is still relatively healthy. It would not have been true if we had not done some of these reforms.

One is, we provided a catastrophic policy that all companies are obligated to pay into to prepare for an event like this. That catastrophic insurance has only used about half of its reserves at the last count, which means that we are still able to function and hopefully the insurance market will still stay relatively healthy.

We upgraded all of our building codes. A building permit to build a new home, especially in coastal areas, means that one has to have a seriously upgraded plan in civil engineering that will protect their property from most winds below 100 or 110 miles an hour. Mobile homes, before the Andrew event, often were put together in a very cheap and slipshod manner, and they literally were just standing like a house of cards on a concrete floor.

We now tie down those buildings. We now make sure that they are much better produced and manufactured and secured in a way that most of the mobile homes that were built after Hurricane Andrew, in 1993, survived the storm in relatively good shape. So we are very grateful for that.

The last thing that I wanted to mention before I turn it back to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is that all of us have

some unique damages here. I have a lot of ferneries and nurseries as part of the key agricultural businesses in Congressional District 24. Under the Department of Agriculture's emergency plan to help farmers and agricultural leaders through a disaster like this, if they have a product that is consumed, they are eligible for some relief.

We are trying, with the good work of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM); of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY); of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the Committee on Appropriations chairman, to see to it that we cannot get some relief for folks that produce the ferneries and the nurseries because they are just as severely impacted by the potential loss of all of their income.

The last thing that I wanted to mention is that, right before I came up here, this Saturday, I spent the better part of the mid morning with Jim Kennedy, the Center Director at Kennedy Space Center. I will tell the Members that we believe that Kennedy has had about \$120 to \$140 million worth of damages at this point. There are some 14,000 workers that have been off work that started back to work today. They are enthusiastic. They are determined that we are going to continue the leading manned space flight in the history of the world.

Fortunately, the three shuttle orbiters that were all there at the Center at the time were safely preserved in their buildings. All Kennedy Space Center personnel are safe and sound. But there have been a couple buildings seriously damaged, including the famous Vehicle Assembly Building.

Until a few years ago, the largest indoor-contained building in the world, this is where the Space Shuttle components are assembled and then moved to eventually the launch pad. By the way, the launch pads, gratefully, are also preserved intact. But over an acre of the south wall, 4-foot-by-16-foot aluminum panels have blown off, including part that make up the beautiful American flag, which is probably about the size of two or three football fields. So this is going to need to be repaired. It is going to take some significant time.

The Thermal Protection System Facility lost half of its roof. It is the place where the outside tiles and the thermal blankets inside protect the Shuttle crew from the intense heat, and literally the top of the building was peeled off like a can opener.

The Florida Space Authority was asked immediately after the storm whether it had any room to possibly continue the production of these very critical tiles for return to flight on a timely schedule and the blankets, and thanks to Winston Scott, the Executive Director of the Florida Space Authority, within seconds, he told Jim Kennedy that absolutely they were going to be able to use the facility that the Florida Space Authority had.

Within 3 or 4 hours, components of the tile and the blanket manufacturing

and processing team was moving into this new facility. So we had very little interruption in what could have been a very significant challenge.

Finally, the diligence of the men and women in the Kennedy Space Center team, including NASA and the private contractors, has made this such that, like a lot of us, we are going to have some damages to repair. We are going to have some streets to clean. We are going to have some buildings to put back in place. But, fortunately, in my district, the Kennedy Space Center came through with the type of harm that could be fixed, fixed very rapidly, and we are anxious to get back to work and get back to normal in Florida.

The last thing I will say is, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) for her leadership here, but we know, having been through two of these now just in the last month, that our thoughts and our prayers are with the folks in the Panhandle of Florida, the folks in Alabama, the folks in New Orleans. We are thinking about them.

And if there is anything good that comes out of these horrible events, it is the way we bond together as communities and as families. I do not think I will ever forget teaching my two small boys, Tommy, who is 12, and Sean, who is 6, as we literally pulled out mattresses from some of the other bedrooms. We pulled them into Mom and my room. We were there with our blankets and pillows. We had our transistor radios. The power was, of course, out. We had a cooler, and we had everything that we needed as a family there during about an hour and a half of real horror during Charley.

But families bond. Communities bond. States bond, and we are grateful to the people of America for thinking about and helping Floridians.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Without a doubt, Mr. Speaker.

Reclaiming my time, the gentleman was in the State legislature, and he had mentioned this, the change in the State building code. And it was very difficult to pass because it did raise the cost of home building in Florida. And I remember that, at the time, and I am sure his constituents complained also, it was causing the cost of home construction to go up, and the builders were very upset, too.

As he looks around his district, I am sure he can differentiate the homes that were built to the newer, higher wind codes as opposed to the older homes, where the wind actually came in and did the substantial amount of damage. And in retrospect, I am sure that all those people who had to pay a couple hundred dollars more, and it did end up being a couple of hundred dollars more, are very glad that Florida did impose stricter building codes.

And it was a tough sell at the time, as I remember, but it truly was as a result of Hurricane Andrew, but also it was because, when a hurricane comes, Florida is usually the first place that it hits.

Mr. FEENEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will yield.

I have a friend who is a civil engineer, and his primary job is to certify each and every set of plans, which is now required since the 1993 changes. I remember asking him at one point, because he designs dozens or hundreds of homes, Why would he have to certify each set of new plans for each new home? Why could he not just certify a model? Would that not be a lot less expensive, cheaper? And his answer was that every location and every building is a little bit different and that, absent this, some day we may regret that we did not require the diligence that the gentlewoman is talking about. That is in the design stage.

Obviously, we required more substantial materials in places. We required storm shutters in certain areas. We have allowed those people to take discounts from their insurance if they would go out and purchase storm shutters. All of that investment was some of the best money ever spent by individual home buyers and home builders in Florida, and I think we are all grateful that we changed, and we were adaptable, we were flexible after Andrew.

There will be lessons learned from Charley and Frances and Ivan, but thanks to her leadership and the policymakers that are forward thinking in Florida, I think we will be in even better shape the next time we face one of these horrible events.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I wanted to share with the gentleman is, just before I came down to the floor, I was handed a list of agricultural losses, and these were compiled obviously from the very hardworking members of the agricultural industry.

And the loss for the fern industry, which I know is very large in the gentleman's area, was anywhere from 65 to 75 million. So, as we proceed with a supplemental bill to assist those who were devastated by the storm, certainly, we are hopeful that we will be able to help out not only the nursery industry, the ferns, but I have a large dairy industry in my area. And so we want to make sure that we are able to help so many of the very hardworking members of the agriculture and aquaculture industry, too.

Mr. FEENEY. Right, Mr. Speaker.

And again, we appreciate her leadership on that. As I took the helicopter ride, we deliberately went over some of the nurseries and ferneries, and they have a lot of glass and plastic buildings that they use to soak up the sun and provide the right amount of water. They do a terrific job, but they have been devastated in many respects. And they are sort of caught in the middle. If they are a typical business, they are eligible for a very low-interest Small Business Administration loan if they are subject to a disaster attack. If one is an agricultural farmer that grows products for consumption, they are

covered by emergency processes in the Department of Agriculture's contingency budget.

□ 2145

But if you grow ferns or other nursery products because your product cannot be consumed, you are at this point considered eligible for neither business assistance nor for agriculture assistance. So it is one of those things that we will work with the administration on to try to fix as rapidly as possible.

I yield back to the gentlewoman.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, when we remember Hurricane Frances, we have to remember that it was so large that at one point it obstructed nearly the entire State of Florida on satellite views. The hurricane actually was estimated to measure twice the size of Texas.

As I went around my district, and my district goes from the coast, from the west coast to just bordering on the gentleman from Florida's district in the Orlando area, as I went around my district after the hurricane struck, I would see homes and stop and talk to the owners. It is amazing, as I mentioned to him, the difference between the older homes and the newer homes. The newer homes did not sustain as much damage because they were built to better safety codes; they were better designed, higher wind loads for the roof. All of those facets made those homes sustain the storm a whole lot better.

While Frances may have ripped roofs off stores and homes, flattened gas station canopies and slammed moored boats against each other, it did not dampen the spirits of the people of Florida. I had a mother come up to me and say, you know, it has always been difficult to turn off the TV, to get the kids to turn off the TV. She said, I never thought I would say this, but we were able to have the television off, and we actually played some board games. She found this to be a great time to get closer to her children. She now has her power restored, and I am sure that television is back on. But overall, people found this a time of great reflection and a time to pray that their friends and neighbors and that their own family members would remain safe.

Mr. Speaker, there is still a lot of repairing that needs to be done. I know, as I was driving Saturday evening around my district, there were piles of debris along the road. And right now, there are still some 213,000 Floridians still without power. When we put that into perspective, there are some people who do not have a home anymore. They do not have the family heirlooms; they do not even have photographs, because all of those were destroyed in the storm. So people can put this lack of electricity into perspective, because in Florida it gets hot and very, very muggy; but at least they still have their homes. A woman pointed that out

to me because she had a friend in another part of the State who lost everything, absolutely everything.

Mr. Speaker, Floridians have hope because they know that we as public servants will not forget them. They know that we will work to the fullest of our abilities to see that they receive the relief that they so desperately need.

I would like to take a moment to certainly applaud FEMA, the SBA, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and so many other organizations that have coordinated relief efforts in our State. There is a wonderful group in my district that is called the Christian Contractors of America, and these are very dedicated, skilled workmen who go out and assist people. I had one constituent who had a tree land on her house and somebody misinformed her that FEMA would take care of the tree. Well, FEMA does not go around cutting down trees. But this great group of Christian contractors we were able to call and, without a doubt, they are there to help. They were there long before the storm, helping people, helping people living in substandard housing. I can think of another example where they helped a battered spouse who had all the windows knocked in.

Organizations such as this, certainly the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, all of the church groups that opened up their doors if they had power and they provided food and they provided air-conditioning and they provided shelter and respite, and a place to come where the community could all come together.

Mr. Speaker, we must answer the needs of Florida and other States. It is not just Florida that gets hit by hurricanes, as Alabama is about to find out, as North Carolina found out last year. I joke with my sister; she lived in North Carolina in Morehead City and she was tired of all the hurricanes hitting there, so she decided to move down to the panhandle of Florida. Well, guess what? She is about ready to be hit by another hurricane.

All of the members of the Florida delegation, regardless of which party we belong to, do not forget our commitment to our constituents. Florida must be helped, and I am sure that Congress will take action.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 60 minutes.

FLOODING IN OHIO

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I was sitting here listening to my colleagues from Florida talking about the disaster that Florida has experienced, and I thought about my own experience in Ohio over the last 2 or 3 days. Ohio is a long way from Florida, but Ohio has been affected, seriously affected by the results of the hurricane, the flood-

ing that has occurred in a number of Ohio counties, which has absolutely been devastating.

In Columbiana County, where I was earlier today, one small township, it is estimated that they have public damages of between \$400,000 and \$500,000. Many roads have been completely washed out. The day before yesterday, I was in another county in my district, Belmont County, a little town called Ness, and in that community there were homes that were completely destroyed and demolished, homes where people will never be able to return to live because they were so terribly damaged. And the damage was caused, in large part, by rain that occurred as a result of the hurricanes that had come in and through Florida.

So it is true that we are very sympathetic with the good people of Florida who have suffered so deeply. We are happy that help and hope is on the way for them. But just this day, I faxed a letter to the White House asking the President to act expeditiously on a request for a Federal declaration which has been sent to him by Ohio's Governor, Bob Taft, asking that these communities in Ohio which have been so terribly, terribly affected be also declared a Federal disaster area, so that appropriate Federal resources can be made available to them.

We need FEMA to come in, to provide temporary housing. I spoke just the day before yesterday with a lady nearly 80 years old who lived by herself, whose total monthly income was \$655 a month. She also was receiving, I think, \$70 per month in food stamps. But her home had been literally destroyed. Her medicine costs were very high, and she was asking what kind of help would be available. And I told her that as soon as the offices opened this morning, Monday morning, that I would be on the phone to the office of FEMA here in D.C. When I contacted them this morning and asked about the request that Governor Taft had submitted for one of the counties, for Columbiana County in Ohio, we were told that the request was under consideration.

But the fact is that we can wait no longer. There are people who are living in cars. There are children who are being kept in fold-out campers. People are without water. We are concerned about the spread of disease. The bottom line is people are suffering terribly in Ohio. I call upon the administration, the President, to recognize what people are going through there.

The geographic area is much smaller than that which was affected in Florida, obviously; but I would contend that there is no one in Florida that has suffered any more than some of the people that I represent. Because when you have lost all that you have, all of your material possessions, when you have no clothing, no personal items, no furniture, when your home has been destroyed and you are with nothing, you are in desperate circumstances; and those are the circumstances that exist

across part of Ohio tonight. I am hopeful that by tomorrow I will get a positive response from the President and the White House, and my hope is the help from the Federal level will be flowing into Ohio just as it is flowing into Florida.

I would also like to note, Mr. Speaker, that even the Red Cross has diverted so much of their personnel and their equipment and their resources to Florida that I am afraid that many of my constituents will fall between the cracks, so to speak, and that their terrible plight will not be expeditiously and properly recognized by our Federal Government.

IRAQ

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight, and I will be joined later by some of my colleagues, to talk about Iraq and what is happening in Iraq. This is an effort that we began literally several months ago, myself and some of my colleagues, coming here to the floor to talk about the policies that we are pursuing in Iraq and trying to point out some of the concerns that we have.

I would just begin our Iraq Watch tonight by sharing an editorial from the Columbus Dispatch, which is the capital city newspaper in Ohio. The Columbus Dispatch has been publishing since 1871. They ran an editorial this past Saturday in observance of the anniversary of September 11. I see my friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), has joined me. Before I yield to him, I would just like to share some thoughts from the Columbus Dispatch because I think they are very relevant to our discussions here regarding Iraq.

The editorial is entitled, "Remember Everything." It begins this way: "Three years ago, 3,000 people were murdered in coordinated terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Yet, the man who orchestrated those atrocities remains free. For what he did, Osama bin Laden should be dead or in U.S. custody. No evidence suggests that he is dead, and he is not in custody. Because he remains free, extraordinary security precautions surround today's Ohio State football game." And, as I said, this is an editorial that appeared last Saturday when Ohio State was playing Marshall University.

So the editorial says: "These security precautions will surround today's Ohio State football game, considered a terrorist target because 100,000 spectators will be gathered in the heart of a State that is key to the Presidential election."

The editorial continues: "Because bin Laden is at liberty, election and law enforcement officials nationwide are busy planning extra security at polling places on November 2. Because bin Laden has not been captured, the Nation's Capital and national monuments, including the Statue of Liberty, have been militarized and fortified. The Bush administration can claim that bin Laden and his cohorts are on