

resolution as well as our request for additional funding for the region.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands for that very powerful statement and for laying out what is at stake and the reality of life during these very tragic times for those in the Caribbean region.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) whose commitment to the Caribbean is longstanding and unwavering.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for helping to organize us to be able to address this most important issue this evening.

I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 496, a resolution that simply supports humanitarian assistance to countries of the Caribbean devastated by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. The recent hurricanes have had devastating impacts on several Caribbean nations. In Grenada, Hurricane Ivan destroyed 90 percent of the homes and 78 percent of the electrical system, as well as numerous government buildings, hospitals, schools and churches. Approximately 60,000 of the island's 95,000 inhabitants were left homeless. In Jamaica, 18,000 people were displaced by Hurricane Ivan, which was the worst natural disaster to hit Jamaica in 50 years. The Bahamas incurred an estimated \$125 million in damage as a result of Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne. In Haiti, Hurricane Jeanne caused extensive flooding and left 300,000 people homeless. More than 1,500 Haitians were killed, and another 900 are still missing. Thousands of people are in desperate need of food, clean water, emergency shelter and medical care. Relief efforts continue to be hampered by water and mud covering the main roads, and stagnant waters have given rise to a large mosquito population that could lead to a malaria epidemic.

The nations of the Caribbean are small island nations that do not have the capacity to respond to the widespread death and destruction caused by hurricanes of this magnitude. Immediate assistance from the United States is critical to enable these countries to meet the emergency needs of their people and begin to rebuild damaged homes and infrastructure.

I am thankful that the President did show some concern, and he proposed \$50 million in supplemental appropriations to cover disaster relief for the nations of the Caribbean that have been devastated by hurricanes and tropical storms. But it is a very small amount, and it cannot begin to meet the tremendous needs of thousands of Haitians, let alone the needs of our other Caribbean neighbors. The affected countries and territories include Bahamas, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent, the Grenadines, Trinidad, Tobago, the Turks and Caicos, even Ven-

ezuela, Cuba, the U.S. Virgin Islands, have all felt the devastation of these hurricanes. So we need a lot more to respond to this terrible devastation.

Even though the President has proposed \$50 million in supplemental appropriations, it is a small amount, and it cannot begin to meet the tremendous needs of thousands of Haitians, let alone the needs of all of these other countries. The Congressional Black Caucus is on record now in asking the President for at least \$500 million in disaster relief to mount an effective response. Of course, I would urge my colleagues to vote for H. Con. Res. 496. I would also urge my colleagues to provide a supplemental appropriation of at least \$500 million in disaster assistance to help our Caribbean neighbors rebuild their homes and their lives after these unprecedented storms. This resolution does not have that amount in it, and we know that we must do the work with the Appropriations Committee, but this is a resolution that would give recognition to this tremendous devastation that has taken place and squarely place us on record in wanting to respond to it.

I am very thankful for the opportunity to share with the gentlewoman from California this concern as we demonstrate through this resolution.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I am a co-sponsor of H. Con. Res. 496. I fully support helping to relieve the suffering of people in the Caribbean. The news reports of the death and destruction in Haiti, Grenada and elsewhere in the Caribbean is just terrible. We all want to reach out and help our neighbors who are suffering.

USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance has been on the ground distributing emergency aid since just after these storms hit. The \$50 million aid package proposed by the Administration is, by all measures, a good start.

But, it should not be considered an end to U.S. assistance. The current proposal represents what the Administration believes can be spent in the first year. By way of comparison, \$52 million was expended during the first year of implementing disaster reconstruction after Hurricane Mitch hit in 1999. I expect to see more aid going to the Caribbean in subsequent years.

Mr. Speaker, while I believe that \$50 million is not sufficient to meet the needs of the Caribbean in the long term, I do believe it is enough to meet the immediate needs of those nations hardest hit. To meet the long term needs of these countries, I would support an effort to provide additional reconstruction funds. Although I am retiring, I am willing to work with my colleagues to secure long term assistance for the Caribbean nations before I go. I hope that my colleagues here tonight will join me in this area.

I thank my colleague from California for bringing this important resolution recognizing the terrible suffering inflicted on the Caribbean by the same hurricanes that did so much damage to our own country. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 496, a bi-partisan effort urging that Congress support humanitarian

assistance to Caribbean countries devastated by the recent hurricanes.

Four hurricanes—Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne—hit the region within five weeks. The affected countries and territories include the Bahamas, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the Turks and Caicos, Venezuela, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but the burden is felt by all. More than 440,000 individuals displaced throughout the region.

Tropical Storm Jeanne killed more than 2,000 people in Haiti, and hundreds remain missing. Men and women dig mass graves, scrambling to identify the bodies of lost loved ones. An estimated 300,000 people remain homeless as a result of the floods.

With eight weeks left to the 2004 Atlantic Hurricane season, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) is urging the Caribbean to remain vigilant. The call comes against the background of an updated hurricane season forecast yesterday which calls for three more storms and two hurricanes this month with a 33 percent chance of a land falling storm and 17 percent chance of a land falling hurricane.

The Administration announced providing \$50 million to assist the region—specifically Haiti, Jamaica, and Grenada with small amounts for the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This is a good start, but much more will be needed to help the entire region.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to reiterate my support for H. Con. Res. 496 and urge the Administration to provide even more aid to assist the region.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 496, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### THE JUDGES OF MADISON COUNTY, PART THREE

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

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, tonight is part three on the judges of Madison County, Illinois. As I promised last week, I am back on the floor tonight to talk about a place that has the dubious distinction of being America's number one "judicial hellhole," Madison County, Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, they do not give out awards like the number one "judicial hellhole" from the American Tort Reform Association to just anyone. No, sir, only a court that continually misapplies civil laws, regularly violates fundamental constitutional rights of defendants, and caters to the interests of opportunistic trial lawyers can get a recognition like that. Sadly, Mr. Speaker the Circuit Court of Madison County, Illinois, got this distinction the old-fashioned way; they earned it.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I want to continue a story I started last week on one of the ways they earned this awful award by trashing someone's first amendment rights. I stood on the floor last week, and I told the Members about the former Attorney General and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Griffin Bell and his experience with Madison County. I told the Members that, at a public forum in April of this year, Judge Bell said that counties like Madison County are a serious "stain on our system," meaning the judicial system. I also told the Members that Judge Bell called for an investigation into the administration of civil justice in Madison County. I finally told the Members, Mr. Speaker, that the wrath of the "judicial hellhole" was felt the very next day when Judge Bell and his firm were barred from appearing in their courtroom. But as Paul Harvey might say, what I did not tell the Members, Mr. Speaker, was the "rest of the story."

Hold on to your hat, Mr. Speaker, because, not long after that outrageous act by the Madison County Court, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that a Madison County judge closed his courtroom to report his warning to cover a hearing about a fee dispute between prominent local trial lawyers. See, Mr. Speaker, as it turns out, the hearing was likely to include arguments over the lawyers' share of fees stemming from a very large class-action settlement, and for once, dollar amounts would likely be released regarding the sizable sums of money that these greedy trial lawyers stood to pocket.

So what happened? Well, you guessed it. The Madison County judge simply refused public access to the transcripts and exhibits from that hearing. Yet, once again, free speech lost, and trial lawyers won.

Mr. Speaker, the message from Madison County Circuit Court judges is simple: We have absolutely no respect for the first amendment. Folks speaking out against our brand of civil injustice should expect intimidation and retaliation, and finally, when court is in ses-

sion, no one is safe unless of course he is of their trial lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, last month, I wrote a letter to U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft asking him to formally investigate the judicial hijinks taking place in Madison County, Illinois. To my surprise, one of the Madison County trial lawyers, a Mr. Randall Bono, took time to ask in a local newspaper, why in the world would someone from Georgia "have an interest" in Madison County?

Mr. Speaker, that is pretty easy. When sleazy trial lawyers like Randall Bono retire when they are 42 years old, because they have pocketed millions of dollars through frivolous lawsuits, when a local court decides to hear cases from around the country it has no business hearing, when the local judicial system stops being a public trust and becomes a private trough for greedy trial lawyers like Randall Bono, when these and countless other injustices are allowed to continue anywhere in this great Nation, it is not a local issue, Mr. Speaker; it is a national issue. And this Congressman from Georgia, for one, has had enough.

Mr. Speaker, let me make this loud and clear to trial lawyers like Randall Bono and corrupt judges of Madison County: They may try to hush up, but I am coming after them, and I cannot and I will not be intimidated on these issues.

#### SMART SECURITY AND DISABLED VETERANS

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration is shamefully neglecting the men and women who serve in the United States Military, even as they return home from a war in Iraq, having lost arms, legs, other parts of their bodies, to suffer forever from other physical or mental disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

In August of 2003, when I spent some time at Bethesda Naval Hospital where I was recuperating from back surgery, we were faced with and I met with the wounded soldiers because I visited them while I was in the hospital, the wounded, who had come home forever changed by the war in Iraq. Meeting with these soldiers and their families and seeing their injuries gave me a firsthand look at the true horrors of war. I became more committed than ever that our government should cover all the expenses of any injury that results from war. But that is just not happening.

The disability benefits and health care system that currently assists 5 million American servicemen and women has become so overburdened by the addition of over 26,000 wounded soldiers from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is now woefully incapable of providing the benefits and services that were promised before those individuals

went to war. Currently, there is a backlog of more than 300,000, and let me say it again, 300,000 service-related claims, and that number is increasing every single day. And since President Bush shamefully relied on thousands of National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers to fight in Iraq, these veterans now deserve veterans benefits, too. It is only appropriate.

Just as President Bush failed utterly in his planning of the Iraq War, he also failed utterly in planning how the Veterans' Administration system would address the hundreds of thousands of soldiers returning from that war. The cowboy mentality of the Bush administration is quite clear: Shoot first, ask questions later, even if asking those questions could have saved lives.

Worst of all, some of our soldiers still are not getting the necessary equipment that can save their lives; the advanced body armor that is capable of stopping bullets from assault rifles; armor for tanks to prevent the destruction of U.S. military convoys; and the water equipment to keep them hydrated in the scorching desert heat. Parents are sending that equipment to their kids, buying it here and sending it to them.

The failure to give this equipment to each and every soldier is particularly shameful considering that, last November, Congress passed legislation to fund the war effort to the tune of \$87 billion. That is on top of the \$78 billion in supplemental funds that was appropriated in March of 2003. Yet reports show that billions of those dollars are being misused, misappropriated and even stolen in Iraq.

And, now, the President plans to reprogram \$3.4 billion of last year's \$18.4 billion supplemental, using it for military purposes instead of for Iraq's reconstruction. So, now, we are forced to pilfer money that was supposed to pay for infrastructure needs for the Iraqi people.

How many more soldiers have to have their limbs shot off before this administration will wake up? How many more soldiers have to die for a President's mistake? There has to be a better way. There has to be a better way than this, and we must fully support the thousands of soldiers who sacrifice to serve and protect America.

That is why I have introduced H. Con. Res. 392, a SMART security platform for the 21st Century. SMART stands for Sensible, Multilateral, American Response to Terrorism. SMART security treats war as an absolute last resort. It fights terrorism with stronger intelligence and multilateral partnerships, and it controls the spread of weapons of mass destruction with aggressive diplomacy, strong regional security arrangements and vigorous inspection regimes. SMART security means equipping our troops with the tools that are essential to their survival and then helping them with proper health care once they get home. But the hawkish Bush administration, which quickly led this country