

And we must use this as an opportunity to find out what went wrong, how our government whose responsibility is protecting its citizens, failed so miserably in the Gulf Region and how we can prevent this tragedy again. I call for an independent Commission, bi-partisan with the full authority of the 9/11 Commission to get to the bottom of this, and recommend to the Congress the changes that will be necessary to protect American lives in the future.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE
HURRICANE KATRINA SUPPLEMENTAL

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mrs. LOWEY. I rise today in support of this legislation, a down payment toward fulfilling our obligation to help the citizens and cities ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

The tragedy of Katrina has exposed some difficult truths of American life. That the richest Nation on earth is just as vulnerable to the laws of nature as the poorest. That the haves are not only poorer than the have-nots—they are also less safe.

The tragedy has also brought into sharp focus the debate about the role of government in citizens' lives. It has exposed the fallacy advanced by the leadership of this Congress and the administration that government is the problem, and it can't ever be the solution.

I believe that government should work with the private sector to help people help themselves to achieve their goals. Government should be a partner in making the lives of Americans better.

Unfortunately, too often, on the floor of this chamber, we've heard from Members who bemoan the size of the government and blast programs to help vulnerable populations, even as they tout legislation providing billions in Federal resources to the most powerful and connected companies and individuals in this country. They have been allowed to snip away at the web of structures put in place to help the American people.

Katrina was the deluge that exposed what we have warned of all along—when you starve the government, it fails those who need it most.

In times of crisis and in times of need, the people expect—and should expect—that their government will stand with them. American taxpayers deserve strong, competent leaders who jump into action, rather than ignore crisis and delay response. Who take responsibility, not rush to point fingers. Who understand that government is necessary and can be a force for good.

Last week, the U.S. Government failed its people. This legislation is merely one step toward repairing this breach of basic trust, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

STATEMENT ON THE SECOND
EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATIONS FOR HURRI-
CANE KATRINA RESPONSE

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, in this time of national tragedy, the merits of this bill are obvious. The American people are generous and insist that we offer aid and assistance to Hurricane Katrina's survivors.

The confidence of our nation was shaken by the slowness and shortcomings of the federal government's response to this massive human tragedy.

While this Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Hurricane Katrina Response provides an additional \$51.8 billion for hurricane relief, much more will need to be done.

Congress must ensure that the victims, and the state, local, federal and private agencies that are trying to care for them, have the resources they need.

However, it is not enough to just vote for large funding bills. Americans also want accountability on the over \$60 billion we have appropriated so far for Hurricane Katrina relief.

We have to make sure that the relief money we are appropriating today and in the future actually gets to the victims, and is not used on unscrupulous contractors or spent on projects that boost the profits of companies seeking to profit at the expense of the hurricane victims and the taxpayers. This was the case in Iraq, where hundreds of millions of dollars were either "lost" or improperly paid to contractors like Halliburton.

To make sure that the \$2 billion that FEMA is now spending every day is properly used, I believe that, even as we appropriate billions for hurricane relief, we also provide additional resources to the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security to help ensure that the additional tens of billions of dollars that will be necessary to care for our fellow Americans and rebuild the South are not wasted through fraud, abuse, overpayments or ineffective government management.

We have many good reasons for concern about wasteful spending. In the 3 years since the Department of Homeland Security, the umbrella department that houses FEMA, was created, numerous reports by the Congress, the Department's Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have detailed instance after instance of contracting deficiencies, fraud, wasteful or lavish spending, lax oversight and management, procurement shortcomings, blurred lines of responsibility and lack of accountability.

I believe that this Congress must make sure, to the greatest extent possible, that the funds that we are appropriating today and in the coming months to help the Hurricane Katrina victims are directed squarely at helping the victims and not those who seek to profit at the expense of the victims who desperately need the help. This is more than just a business opportunity for the Administration's friends. It is an opportunity to do the right thing and help those who are suffering, and it is our obligation.

I also want to express my disappointment in the bicameral review committee created by the

Republican Majority to examine the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina. This committee, simply put, will be toothless.

HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with persons across this great nation and this world to express my condolences for those who have suffered as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I also want to commend all those people who have worked hard to lift up their fellow man during this time of crisis.

This disaster is one unlike anything we've ever seen before. At one point 80 percent of the city of New Orleans was under water. Up to 1 million families have been displaced. There are estimates that 400,000 to 500,000 people could lose their jobs because of the hurricane. And despite the magnitude of these numbers, they still don't do justice to the human suffering we have seen on television and in person.

But out of every tragedy comes the opportunity for each and every person to show his or her humanity through acts of compassion. That is why I am so proud of my fellow Texans and my fellow Houstonians. From Governor Rick Perry, Mayor Bill White, and Judge Robert Eckels on down, everyone has come together to make sure that we do everything in our power to help the quarter of a million evacuees we have taken in. In the Houston area alone, we have taken in over 100,000 of our neighbors to the east, 15,000 of which were sheltered in the Astrodome, which is in my Congressional District.

Several organizations in the Houston area are leading the disaster relief effort. Some of the help is coming from volunteers with Operation Compassion, a massive relief effort led by Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston and spearheaded by the Second Baptist Church. The thousands of volunteers from 131 local congregations have assumed primary responsibility for feeding the masses of storm victims who have taken refuge there. I commend them and others for extending their good will towards others.

As we in Congress look towards our next steps, we must ensure that our top priority remains caring for those who have lost loved ones, lost their homes, and lost their means of providing for their families. They have, through no fault of their own, become the least, the last, and the lost of our society. It is our responsibility to help them back on their feet. To do so they will need food stamp assistance and access to Medicaid. They will need temporary emergency housing and the federal assistance to help them rebuild their homes and their lives.

We have taken important first steps by passing a \$10.5 billion disaster relief bill last Friday, followed by an additional \$51.8 billion for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security today. But these are only the first in a long series of actions that we will need to try to repair the physical damage caused by Hurricane Katrina as well as the lives of those affected by the hurricane. I ask that all of my distinguished colleagues and the

people of this nation join in the effort to help rebuild and sustain the lives of the Hurricane Katrina victims.

CONCERNING THE DEVASTATION
AND FEDERAL RESPONSE TO
HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask that we consider four realities about our nation's response to Hurricane Katrina.

Allow me first to commend all of the Americans who have responded so nobly. They have demonstrated the best of our shared humanity.

That brings me to a second, less-praiseworthy reality. Poverty, age and skin color—in that order—have been major factors in this life-or-death equation for the vast majority of the victims. That is a fact, not an opinion—a fact that we must address as a nation.

As Americans, we are all in this life together—especially during times of imminent danger and emergency. And the policies and actions of our Federal Government should reflect this reality.

Third, as we respond to this disaster—and as we prepare for the dangers that the future will surely bring to our country—we cannot eliminate the reality of widespread (and growing) poverty on the Gulf Coast and throughout this country. And we must not act as if what we do here in Washington has no impact upon that deprivation. The Census Bureau just reported that for the fourth straight year, the number of Americans falling into poverty has increased. Thirty-seven million Americans now live in poverty, including 13 million children.

Not surprisingly, those who were already most vulnerable were the largest group of Americans left stranded, unable to escape the storm or the flood that followed.

The poor, the sick, the weak, the vulnerable—so often after-thoughts in today's Federal budget decisions—were left behind again. We must care for them and help those who survived to reclaim their lives.

That means, in the first instance, that we must not further penalize those who have suffered so much.

For those who were living in the Gulf Coast disaster area, we should: (1) Stop the clock on Federal time limits for all income related benefits (including those related to TANF, food stamps, and Federal Unemployment Insurance benefits); (2) Suspend the work requirements for TANF and the requirement that those who receive unemployment insurance continue to look for work; (3) We should extend Medicaid eligibility to CHIP parents for 12 months; and (4) The Federal Government should cover all the costs for these programs, relieving the hard-hit states of this burden.

In addition, we should do everything within our power to employ the people who have lost their jobs and homes as a result of this disaster in the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Government and the private sector should begin immediately to retrain and hire these Americans to participate in the rebuilding of their communities.

We should make sure they are mentally ready to begin rebuilding by offering coun-

seling services, similar to those offered after 9-11. With skills, job and counseling where necessary, they will be able to become home owners and re-establish the foundation of their communities.

Finally, we also must face and overcome another reality. Federal budget choices (misguided choices, in my view) have seriously weakened the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the federal agency that is supposed to be our safety net of last resort when disaster strikes.

The media has been accurate in reporting how decisions by the Administration and the leaders of this Congress to cut funding to the Army Corps of Engineers and the FEMA disaster prevention programs have weakened our ability to respond effectively.

Choices made in Washington have resulted in deaths in New Orleans. The President and this Congress must account for the shortcomings in the Federal disaster effort for which we are responsible—and work together to do a better job in the future.

As I close, allow me to say that I remain optimistic. I am optimistic that we will find a way to organize FEMA in a way that allows it to respond effectively—maximizing the saving of lives.

I am optimistic that this Congress will come up with a viable plan to try to make these victims and evacuees whole again—partisanship aside.

I believe that the American people are up to this test—that we truly can rise to overcome almost any hardship that is thrust upon us.

Any of us—and our families—could well be facing the same hardships, the same pain, the same loss of home and job and dignity that the survivors of Hurricane Katrina must now overcome.

These are our people, my friends, and this is our country. We have it within our power to rise from the hesitancy and failure of past days and rebuild. We shall rebuild New Orleans. We shall rebuild the Gulf Coast. And we shall rebuild our self-confidence as a great Nation and a great people.

COMMEMORATING THE SESQUI-
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF
ARCADIA, WISCONSIN

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate Sesquicentennial celebration of Arcadia, one of Wisconsin's many treasures. Named after the Arkadhia Mountains in Greece, Arcadia boasts an historic downtown in the midst of some of the most beautiful farmland and countryside in western Wisconsin.

It is fitting that I join with the 2,400 residents of Arcadia to celebrate the town's founding, because this truly is a town that has not forgotten where it came from. Perhaps Arcadia's most storied attraction is its Memorial Park. The park's 54 acres display monuments and tributes to the town's history, our nation's wars and conflicts, and those men and women who fought and died in them. The walkway through the park is measured so that each meter represents one year, so visitors complete their own guided tour of history. Joining the statues,

plaques, and monuments are some of the real instruments of war: a tank, a Howitzer artillery gun, and an F-16 fighter jet. The dedication shown in procuring these artifacts and the endless care that go into maintaining the grounds demonstrate that the spirit of America runs through Arcadia.

Apart from Memorial Park, Arcadia exemplifies the quality of life available to those who call rural America home. The Trempeleau River, which flows to the Mississippi, offers opportunities for fishing and canoeing, eagle-watching is popular year-round, and stock car races are held every Friday in the warmer months at the Fox Ridge Speedway. The town also hosts the Arcadia Broiler Dairy Days celebration over Memorial Day Weekend, which includes the 62-mile Memorial Bike Tour. This vibrant community truly is a model for rural areas across the state of Wisconsin and America, proving that a city doesn't have to be big to be creative, exciting, and fun.

A giant corn maze in town already announces the sesquicentennial celebration, which will be held this Saturday, September 10, 2005. Arcadia will mark its first 150 years with such events as the dedication of a local firefighters memorial, a classic car rally, and the entombing of a time capsule to remind future generations of this great milestone. I congratulate the residents of Arcadia on their sesquicentennial, and I thank them for all they have contributed to the character and economy of western Wisconsin. I wish them continued happiness and prosperity in the next 150 years.

STATEMENT OF INTRODUCTION OF
THE HURRICANE KATRINA BANK-
RUPTCY RELIEF AND COMMU-
NITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today Rep. MEL WATT, Rep. JERROLD NADLER, Rep. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE and twenty four additional original co-sponsors have joined me in introducing the "Hurricane Katrina Bankruptcy Relief and Community Protection Act of 2005", to protect the thousands of families and small businesses financially devastated by Hurricane Katrina from being penalized by anti-debtor provisions contained in a new bankruptcy law scheduled to take effect on October 17, 2005.

We are concerned that, just as survivors of Hurricane Katrina are beginning to rebuild their lives, the new bankruptcy law, effective October 17, 2005, will result in a further and unintended financial whammy.

Unfortunately, the new bankruptcy law will have the consequence of preventing thousands of devastated families from being able to obtain relief from the massive and unexpected financial obligations they are incurring. The inflexible bankruptcy law will force victims of Hurricane Katrina to repay debt with income they no longer have, file paper work with documents that no longer exist, and travel to courts that are possibly hundreds of miles away. It is simply absurd to place these obstacles between survivors and financial security.

When the Judiciary Committee considered the Bankruptcy Abuse and Consumer Protection Act earlier this year, Ms. JACKSON-LEE offered an amendment to protect the victims of