

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-praise-worthy 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 SESQUICENTENNIAL 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 Arkadia 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 Trempealeau 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 BANKRUPTCY RELIEF AND COMMUNITY 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

natural disaster like those now devastated by Hurricane Katrina. While the amendment was defeated on a party line vote without any debate, we hope that in light of recent events our colleagues will recognize the importance of protecting our most financially vulnerable Americans.

This bill will prevent new bankruptcy provisions from having adverse and unintended consequences for the hundreds of thousands now facing financial catastrophe by providing needed flexibility for victims of natural disasters in bankruptcy proceedings.

This common sense bill will insure that we do not compound a natural disaster with a man made financial disaster. I hope there will be bipartisan support for expedited consideration of this critical legislation.

HONORING THE MALAKOFF
ROTARY CLUB

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to commemorate two significant anniversaries of Rotary International. This year, Rotary International celebrated its 100th anniversary. From its humble roots in Chicago, Illinois, Rotary has grown into a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. Since 1943, Rotary International has distributed more than \$1.1 billion to combat Polio, promote cultural exchanges and encourage community service.

I also want to recognize the Malakoff Rotary Club for their 66 years of service to Henderson County. Throughout its history, the Malakoff Rotary Club has achieved great success in carrying out the mission of Rotary International.

In past years, the Malakoff Rotary Club has raised money to provide scholarships for local students and sponsored programs to improve area literacy. In addition, they have sponsored numerous activities with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs, Eustace Children's Home and the Henderson County Crisis Center.

Through these initiatives, the Malakoff Rotary Club exemplifies the values of service and charity that lie at the heart of American society. As the Congressional representative of the members of this outstanding organization, it is my distinct pleasure to honor them today on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARISING FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF HURRICANE KATRINA, 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 2, 2005

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, my deepest sympathies are with those families who are af-

fected by the worst natural disaster our country has ever seen. I also extend my gratitude to those first responders, members of the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Guard, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their aid and assistance in relief and recovery efforts.

Like the rest of America, I was extremely frustrated and angered with the lack of preparedness and timely response by the Federal Government. This was an instance where the system failed. Five days after the hurricane, thousands were still without food, shelter and clothing. We saw on television grueling pictures of our most needy: the poor, elderly, and children stranded in unbelievable conditions. Many Americans, Democrats and Republicans alike—even President Bush himself—have recognized that the initial federal response was “not acceptable”.

New Orleans is the only major American city below sea level, and it is wedged between Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. In the case of a bad hurricane hitting, experts have said for some time now, that the city could “fill up like a cereal bowl, killing tens of thousands and laying waste to the city’s architectural heritage.” Despite speculation that a disaster of this magnitude could occur in this region, the President’s recent budgets have actually proposed to reduce funding for flood prevention in the New Orleans area.

In June 2004, Walter Maestri, emergency management chief for Jefferson Parish, fretted to The Times-Picayune in New Orleans: “It appears that the money has been moved in the President’s budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq, and I suppose that’s the price we pay. Nobody locally is happy that the levees can’t be finished, and we are doing everything we can to make the case that this is a security issue for us.”

With hundreds of millions of dollars and 40 percent of our National Guard already dedicated to the War in Iraq, Katrina is a glaring example of the question of whether or not we are able to effectively handle problems that arise here at home.

While this is most certainly concerning, the important thing right now, is ensuring that the Federal Government is doing everything humanly possible to help the victims of this catastrophe. As this crisis continues, our first priority must be to provide those affected with basic human needs.

Looking to the days and weeks ahead, Congress also needs to investigate the lack of response of government and look into what hampered relief efforts at the most critical time. In this regard, particular focus should be placed on the organization of DHS and FEMA.

Again, it is clear that there was a lack of adequate preparedness and response. I had concerns during the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) about whether it was appropriate to fold this vital agency for national emergency preparedness into DHS, rather than leave it as an independent agency.

I voted against the inclusion of FEMA into the Department of Homeland Security back in 2002. My concerns in this instance may have been well founded, as FEMA’s initial response was lacking at best and failed to deliver urgently needed help.

I have joined with Congressman DINGELL to introduce legislation to remove FEMA from DHS so it will once again be an independent agency with cabinet-level status. The bill also

requires that the Director of FEMA be an emergency management professional, and creates two deputy directors—one responsible for natural disasters and the other responsible for terrorism related disasters with each required to have significant experience related to their positions.

While this legislation would be a start in addressing concerns of the American people about the handling of emergency situations, the fact remains that it is still the responsibility of the appropriate agencies to have comprehensive plans in place beforehand in order to avoid the situation we are currently finding ourselves in.

At this time, we don’t have all of the answers as to why relief and recovery efforts fell short. One thing we do know is this national tragedy in the Gulf States highlights the importance of the ability of our first responders to communicate in the event of a national emergency. Public safety, government and military leaders have all said that the inability of local, State, and Federal agencies to communicate was a major obstacle that made the crisis worse. As President Bush said after September 11th, the ability for first responders to communicate is critical in the hours after a crisis. Unfortunately, it has been 4 years since September 11th, and clearly we have made little progress in addressing our first responders’ communications needs. I call on Congress to make a real commitment to the public safety officers who are working so bravely and diligently to help the victims of this national disaster.

Finally, I was very pleased Congress acted quickly to pass the \$10.5 billion emergency supplemental bill. This is an important first step in the effort to provide direct relief. We are now hearing that the devastation this deadly storm has left in its path may cost upwards of \$40 billion. That is equal to the funding provided in the emergency supplemental bill passed after the September 11th terrorist attacks. Congress must provide whatever is necessary to help our Southern friends.

It is a travesty that here in America we have seen our own citizens affected by Hurricane Katrina suffer without the basic necessities required for survival, including food, water, clothing and shelter. However, communities across our country are coming together to help provide much needed assistance. The Mayor of Detroit, Michigan, has announced that Detroit will provide transportation to the Detroit region, temporary housing, food, and even open their schools and provide counseling for the victims. This is just one example of many across our Nation where the American people are pulling together and showing an outpouring of generosity and regard for humanity.

My thoughts and prayers are with all of those who have suffered throughout this tragedy. My colleagues and I in Congress must and will do whatever is in our power to assist the ongoing rescue and relief efforts.

ART CANTU: 2005 LABOR LEADER
OF THE YEAR

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, today I acknowledge a great friend of labor, Art Cantu—