

ON INTRODUCING THE FAIR WAGES FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Fair Wages for Hurricane Victims Act. This legislation reverses the unconscionable proclamation by the President last week to suspend Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections for workers in certain areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The Davis-Bacon Act requires that Federal contractors pay their workers at least the prevailing wage—simply the wage that is typical for their kind of job in their community. The prevailing wage requirement ensures that the Federal Government does not drive down workers' wages when it spends taxpayer dollars. The President's suspension of the Act is the wrong policy in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many of the workers subjected to these wage cuts have lost everything—their homes, their property, their jobs, and even family members. The best way to help them rebuild—not just the Gulf Coast but their lives—is to provide them with a decent job at a fair wage. America owes it to the victims of Hurricane Katrina that they can play a role in cleaning up and rebuilding their devastated communities at a wage that will allow them and their families to get back on their feet.

Suspending the Davis-Bacon Act, however, means that Federal contractors receiving tens of billions of taxpayer dollars can pay their workers whatever wage they can get away with. Lower pay not only means unnecessary further hardship for working families, it means less quality work for taxpayer dollars. It means bigger profits for big contractors at the expense of working families. It means less money being pumped into the local economy, as local workers have less money to spend. As a New York Times editorial, which I attach to this statement for the record, succinctly put it, the President's suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act is "a shameful proclamation."

The Fair Wages for Hurricane Victims Act will restore Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections to the workers who have lost so much. The victims of Katrina are not a source of cheap labor for big contractors looking for big profits. They are American workers whose hard work and commitment to rebuilding must not be undervalued.

I urge the President to rescind his executive order on Davis-Bacon, and in lieu of his taking such action I strongly urge my colleagues to support my bill and I urge its speedy passage.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 10, 2005]

A SHAMEFUL PROCLAMATION

On Thursday, President Bush issued a proclamation suspending the law that requires employers to pay the locally prevailing wage to construction workers on federally financed projects. The suspension applies to parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.

By any standard of human decency, condemning many already poor and now bereft people to subpar wages—thus perpetuating their poverty—is unacceptable. It is also bad for the economy. Without the law, called the Davis-Bacon Act, contractors will be able to pay less, but they'll also get less, as lower wages invariably mean lower productivity.

The ostensible rationale for suspending the law is to reduce taxpayers' costs. Does Mr. Bush really believe it is the will of the American people to deny the prevailing wage to construction workers in New Orleans, Biloxi and other hard-hit areas? Besides, the proclamation doesn't require contractors to pass on the savings they will get by cutting wages from current low levels. Around New Orleans, the prevailing hourly wage for a truck driver working on a levee is \$9.04; for an electrician, it's \$14.30.

Republicans have long been trying to repeal the prevailing wage law on the grounds that the regulations are expensive and bureaucratic; weakening it was even part of the Republican Party platform in 1996 and 2000. Now, in a time of searing need, the party wants to achieve by fiat what it couldn't achieve through the normal democratic process.

In a letter this week to Mr. Bush urging him to suspend the law, 35 Republican representatives noted approvingly that Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Richard Nixon and the elder George Bush had all suspended the law during "emergencies." For the record, Mr. Roosevelt suspended it for two weeks in 1934, to make time to clear up contradictions between it and another law. Mr. Nixon suspended it for six weeks in 1971 as part of his misbegotten attempt to control spiraling inflation. And Mr. Bush did so after Hurricane Andrew in 1992, two weeks before he was defeated by Bill Clinton, who quickly reinstated it after assuming the presidency.

If Mr. Bush does not rescind his proclamation voluntarily, Congress should pass a law forcing him to do so.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on Tuesday September 13, 2005 due to a unavoidable circumstances in my Congressional District. Had I been present, I would have voted: "Yea" to S. Con Res. 26—Honoring and memorializing the passengers and crew of United Airlines Flight 93; "Yea" to H.R. 3649—the Sportfishing and Recreational Boating Safety Amendments Act and "Yea" to S. 276—the Wind Cave National Park Boundary Revision Act.

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY'S FUND-RAISING EFFORTS FOR HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the overwhelming generosity of West Virginians, in the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina continued on the campus of Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. As part of a fundraising effort spearheaded by various campus organizations and coordinated with the American Red Cross, fans attending the Marshall-Kansas State football game were asked to "Bring a Buck", just one dollar, to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

From the crowd of nearly 37,000 fans, a volunteer army of students, faculty and staff were able to raise more than \$520,000 in just a matter of hours. This volunteer force of over 150 individuals, including Marshall President Stephen J. Kopp, spread out around the stadium with members of the local Red Cross chapter to accept donations as fans arrived at the game.

Thanks must be given to the many student organizations who volunteered their time and efforts to make this happen. Groups participating in the "Bring a Buck" event were: Student Government Association; Biology Club; Delta Sigma Theta, Student Ambassadors; Pre-AMSA (American Medical Student Association); Honors 101; Circle K; Campus Crusade for Christ; Phi Mu; Gamma Beta Phi; Alpha Tau Omega; Athletics, Staff and Recreational Sports.

The hard work and determination of these students to help out their neighbors in the Gulf region inspired Marshall Alumni, members of the Marshall University Foundation, Inc., the Board of Directors and others to rise to the challenge of "Bringing a Buck" and more. In one case, an anonymous donation of \$250,000 was made, inspiring other donors to give as much as \$25,000 each.

I applaud Student Body President Michael Misiti's challenge to other higher education institutions in the country to match Marshall's fundraising total. This sentiment was echoed by Governor Joe Manchin, who was at the game and issued his own challenge to the other 49 governors to work with their universities and colleges to sponsor a "Bring a Buck" event during upcoming football games.

This generous outpouring of support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina from West Virginians is not surprising. In fact, this is just the latest response by Marshall University as part of Thunder Relief 2005, a joint effort by students, faculty and staff in response to the devastation from the disaster in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

From waiving all application and late fees for displaced students, to offering free online courses, to coordinating through the Marshall medical school with medical personnel in hurricane-stricken areas who need assistance, Marshall University has not hesitated in doing their part to help out their fellow Americans.

We in the Mountain State have had our share of devastating floods and are familiar with the needs of those most affected by this tragic disaster. I am proud of the generous spirit of humanity being shown by my fellow West Virginians and I am proud to call the Mountain State my home.

HONORING JAMES AND VIRGINIA LAWRENCE, 2005 ANGELS IN ADOPTION

HON. JIM COOPER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to recognize and pay tribute to this year's Angels in Adoption award-ees from the Fifth District of Tennessee—James and Virginia Lawrence. This honor is given by the Congressional Coalition in Adoption to extraordinary individuals, like the Lawrences, who have made a tremendous difference in the lives of foster children.

In 1992, after raising four biological children, James and Virginia Lawrence welcomed into their home their first foster child. Little did they know that this decision would be the first step in what would become a life-long commitment to helping needy children. Over the last twelve years, the Lawrences have tirelessly devoted their lives to caring for, loving, and supporting more than 200 children who have come into their home through Tennessee's foster care system.

The Lawrences stand out as foster parents for two reasons: their absolute devotion to the children who come into their home, and their tireless work to reunite children with their birth parents. According to Mrs. Lawrence, many of the birth parents "needed parenting themselves. We taught many of them how to be parents, by providing counsel, offering advice and by our example." Whenever it became clear that returning to a birth parent was not a good option for one of their foster children, the Lawrences knew what to do—they simply adopted the child. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence have extended their loving family by adopting Alisa, now 24, Peggy, 21 and Shelby, 18.

Mr. Lawrence said that, before retiring from the city's police force, he was greatly affected by the many children taken from their families. That experience moved him and his wife to open their home to children in need of a healthy, secure home environment. He added that, "helping children has been a blessing for him and his wife as well." Virginia Lawrence said that, "having the kids around keeps your heart beating another day." She continues to teach the four foster children currently in their home the independent living skills they'll need to build a promising and rewarding life.

The Lawrence's big hearts, patience and devotion is evidenced by the countless number of children they have reached out to over the years; and in their willingness to continue opening their doors to young people in need of a warm, secure and loving home.

On behalf of the Fifth District of Tennessee, I congratulate and thank the Lawrences for setting a wonderful example of what it means to make a difference in the community and in the lives of our most vulnerable children. I hope we'll all reflect on the Lawrence's model "of ordinary people, doing extraordinary things" as we reach out to help those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF OSIRIS CHRISTOPHER EARL NURSE

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today, I am happy to congratulate Shannon and Courtney Nurse on the birth of their new baby boy. Osiris Christopher Earl Nurse was born on September 13, 2005, at 10:24 p.m., weighing 6 pounds, 2.4 ounces, and measuring 19.5 inches long. Osiris has been born into a loving home, where he will be raised by parents who are devoted to his well-being and bright future. His father Courtney is a tremendous help to my staff and countless other people throughout Capitol Hill. Today, we are pleased to celebrate Osiris' healthy birth and welcome him to Washington.

INTRODUCING A BILL ESTABLISHING THE KATRINA COMMISSION

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleague from New Jersey, Representative MENENDEZ, to introduce legislation establishing the Katrina Commission to examine and evaluate the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina and assess our ability to respond to future large-scale disasters. We are proud that our legislation is the companion bill to S. 1622 which was introduced last week in the Senate by our colleagues Senators CLINTON and MIKULSKI.

While the long-term impact of Hurricane Katrina will be felt for years, our evaluation of the Federal Government's response to, and preparation for, this and other major disasters—natural and man-made—must begin immediately.

Mirrored after the 9-11 Commission, the Katrina Commission will consist of 10 members with no more than 5 being from either the Republican or Democratic parties, thus ensuring an independent and diverse make-up of commission members. The Katrina Commission will be afforded the same powers which the 9-11 Commission enjoyed and will be tasked at finding the answers to the critical questions that we all have. These include but are not limited to:

Were we adequately prepared to respond to a disaster of this magnitude? Are we any more prepared today than we were before Katrina?

What plans were in place before Katrina made landfall to meet power, utility, and telecommunications needs following the storm? What plans are in place for future disasters?

What was the availability of adequate resources to meet the needs of displaced individuals and families, including temporary housing, medical services and facilities, transportation, and food and water supplies?

Did our Federal disaster response plans consider the needs of all communities? What plans existed to ensure that underserved communities reached safety before and after Katrina?

How effective was the Federal Government in its rescue and other life-saving techniques?

Was the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina efficiently coordinated with State and local governments? Was it adequate and appropriate in size and scope?

What improvements do the Executive and Legislative Branches need to make to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our disaster response programs?

Mr. Speaker, my Congressional District received the brunt of three major hurricanes last year. As I said earlier today, certainly our first priority has to be to rescue those who are still alive and provide them with housing, medical attention, food, and water. However, as the Gulf Coast turns to the recovery and rebuilding processes, the billions that Congress will spend will not be enough to fix the problems that exist within FEMA.

Based on my own personal experience dealing with FEMA and its director over the last year, I warn the Members of this body that

the problems you see today are just the tip of the iceberg—and it has nothing to do with the magnitude of the disaster.

Inconsistency in FEMA regulations, constant reinterpretations of the Stafford Act, Federal officials treating local emergency operations centers like revolving doors, lack of coordination, and FEMA's fluid and unclear chain of command are just a few of the many significant and real problems that Floridians dealt with last year and are still dealing with today.

I have literally begged the committees of jurisdiction in this body to hold hearings on these shortcomings. I even introduced bipartisan legislation in March with our colleague, CLAY SHAW, to address a slew of institutional problems within FEMA that we experienced first-hand last year.

Yet every time we take our concerns to the committees, we're told, "It's not a big enough problem to consider on its own." Well, Mr. Speaker, is the problem big enough now? How many people must die in a disaster before something becomes a "big enough problem" in this Congress?

Accountability is the only way to restore integrity in a broken system. An independent commission is the first step in repairing our disaster response system, which we all now know is woefully inadequate.

I ask for my colleague support for this legislation, and I urge the House Leadership to bring it swiftly before the House for its consideration.

TRIBUTE TO LEWIS PLATT

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Lewis Platt, the leading Director of the Board of the Boeing Company and the former Chairman, CEO, and President of Hewlett Packard, who died unexpectedly on Thursday, September 8, 2005.

With Lew's death, our nation has lost one of the leading lights of the business world, a prominent member of the Silicon Valley community, and a wonderful human being.

Lew's death at the age of 64 is a shock to those of us who were privileged to work with him and know him well. He was a person whose example and guidance will be greatly missed. His decency, his integrity, and his common touch made him stand out in a business world known for the archetypal hard-charging executive.

Lew's legacy will be most closely linked with Hewlett Packard, where he worked for more than 30 years. He began his career there as an engineer and rose through the ranks to lead the company from 1992 to 1999 as its CEO.

Lew was a product of the "HP Way," the "walking-around" style of management pioneered by Bill Hewlett and David Packard that encouraged employees to bring their ideas to top management. He embraced the HP Way and was known to eat lunch regularly with employees in the company's cafeteria. He eschewed the privileges enjoyed by most executives of major corporations and unlike most, he always flew coach.

He knew the dividends that the HP Way could bring, and he was able to guide the