

But before we need to do that, we must set up a central command center to coordinate the response from top to bottom. One of the many complaints that we have heard is that no one is in charge. We need someone leading the recovery efforts, calling the shots and directing the resources where they are needed most. We are now a Nation at war with time, and we need a real war room to ensure these people survive.

Another complaint we hear often is a lack of communication. There is no power, so TVs and radios do not work and cell phone communication is sketchy at best.

Today, almost 5 days after Hurricane Katrina rocked the Gulf Coast, people still have no idea what to do. First responders need good information to tell people where to go for help. Rescue workers need the Federal Government to pitch in and give them the communication and technology necessary to coordinate their efforts.

Finally, law and order must be restored. People in these flood-ravaged areas are homeless, scared and desperate. Some have crossed the line and turned to violence. The National Guard needs to move in immediately in massive numbers to restore peace and stability along with local law enforcement.

This is all on the short term. In the long term, these hurricane victims need somewhere to go until their towns and cities can be rebuilt. The Federal Government needs to consider opening up military bases across the country so families can live there until they are put back in their homes or put back in their own lives. Every State in the country should consider taking a certain number of families and housing them in their State so everyone can pitch in.

Finally, once we have done all of this, we must evaluate what was done wrong and what was done right. We must learn from this experience so that we can better respond the next time.

In closing, I know there are many inspiring stories that are not being told, the massive efforts of the Coast Guard to rescue everyone they could and other individuals out there who have put their lives on the line to help and save other people, the neighbors helping neighbors make it through the worst natural disaster many have ever seen. Those are not the stories that are making the evening news.

But I know the true value of the American spirit. In these dark times, I know these communities will be rebuilt, and these families, these cities and towns and this Nation will persevere.

HELPING THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon in support of the supplemental appropriation. It is with great sadness that we are being called upon today to address this issue.

Let me begin my remarks by first commending those great Americans who are engaged in the rescue efforts down in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. They are great Americans.

This tragedy today brings back unpleasant memories. It was my district in eastern North Carolina that was devastated in 1999 by Hurricane Floyd; and so we know so well, so well, the pain of those people who are displaced. So on behalf of the people of the First Congressional District of North Carolina, we offer our prayers and sincere concern for their welfare.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the absence of an adequate plan to cope with the damage done by this hurricane. Hurricane Katrina has triggered a nightmare, a nightmare, for thousands of our citizens. Many thousands at this very moment are in harm's way. They are displaced, they are hungry, they need medical assistance. They need every resource that this government has available, and that includes FEMA's assistance, transportation and housing assistance from the military and other humanitarian assistance.

These displaced families must be extricated from the danger that surrounds them; and we have the capacity, we have the capacity to do it, and we must accelerate our efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that several military bases are willing and able to provide immediate housing for these victims. Space is available. There is substantial housing resources on our bases, and we must use them. As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I encourage us to use our military resources to the fullest.

There are many, many communities across the South and across this country who are eager to provide housing and health care and education for these victims. In Columbia, South Carolina, for example, those great Americans want to care for these victims; and they are conferencing right now with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

In my State of North Carolina, Laurinburg Institute is eager to provide space and educational opportunities for up to 200 school-age children. We must begin to move these families to loving American communities.

Mr. Speaker, we must also protect communities. We must protect communities who open their resources to displaced families. We must guarantee to them that the cost of care for these families will be provided. We must also guarantee that they will not incur any legal liability as a result of their efforts.

So I want to encourage FEMA to quickly secure trailer homes needed for temporary housing. My constituents in

1999 were required to wait, in our opinion, an unreasonable time before trailers were erected. I know it cannot be done with the snap of a finger, but the process must be expedited. FEMA must execute a comprehensive plan that will not result in the dumping of these displaced families when the FEMA specialists complete their work. This was a problem in 1999. These specialists must provide one message, and they must stay on site until every issue is resolved.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that the Federal Government provide full financial assistance to these displaced families, and that includes housing and health care for those who choose to decline FEMA housing and elect to stay with their family and their friends. They too, they too deserve an assistance stipend.

The distinguished gentleman from California, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, stated a few minutes ago, actually it was a couple of hours ago now, that money will not make the difference in the final analysis. Well, I understand the import of that statement, but I want to emphasize that adequate money resources will make life better, will make life better for these Americans. We should not suggest otherwise.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Federal Government does not and cannot act with precision in these types of disasters, but we must insist that FEMA and the military and the National Guard and other rescue efforts engage in coordinated efforts, and we must provide the resources.

I applaud and support the minority leader's suggestion of a select hurricane task force. I support the idea.

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REBUILDING COMMUNITIES DEVASTATED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the emergency supplemental appropriations for hurricane disaster relief. The \$10.5 billion that we have acted upon today will be a downpayment, and we must recognize it as such, a downpayment on a much longer-term investment that we will have to make to restore the communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

I commend the leadership, majority and minority, of both the House and the Senate, for this timely response, as we did in reacting to the attacks of September 11, 2001. I especially appreciate the persistence of our minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), in pressing for action by Congress this week, not waiting until after return from the Labor Day recess.

The massive disaster unfolding before the Nation's eyes on television has both statewide and personal dimensions. In my family, it is very personal. My wife, Jean, is a member of the third generation of a long-standing New Orleans family. Her brothers, Charles and Edward Denechaud, live there, their homes inundated by water, perhaps irretrievable. Jean's classmates and dearest friends, still in New Orleans, all are experiencing inexpressible loss.

My heart goes out to our House colleague and our colleague on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, my good friend, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), whose home in Mississippi is devastated, just kindling, and to the former majority leader of the Senate, Trent Lott, a good friend of mine, whom I have known since he came to Congress. His home, likewise, was devastated.

It shows that the hurricane respects no status and no condition of existence, but has treated rich and poor, famous and infamous, alike, terribly, drastically; that recovery will take years and most damage will be irreparable because of the destructive effects of water standing for days, perhaps even weeks, and toxic polluted water at that.

There are inspiring stories of humanitarian response, such as my good friend from Duluth, a businessman, Jeno Paulucci, who has sent truckloads of thousands of bottles of desperately needed water to the disaster area.

I want to put this issue in another context, a larger context, of natural disasters in the United States. Over the last 20 years, from 1980 through 2000, this Congress has appropriated \$35 billion, \$35,668,000,000 to be exact. Insured losses totaled an additional \$115 billion, for a total of \$150.6 billion in FEMA-insured disaster assistance for hurricanes and earthquakes and other similar tragedies.

But what is most striking is that the period of 1993 through 2000, in just 7 years, the figure is \$28.4 billion in disaster assistance. It suggests that we are going to continue to see disasters of enormous proportions, increasing in cost and intensity over the years ahead.

The city of New Orleans is divided into 13 levee districts by the Corps of Engineers to provide flood protection from the Mississippi River to the south and Lake Pontchartrain to the north, as well as protection from hurricane and storm damage from frequent smaller-scale storms. Two portions of these levees failed, for reasons yet unknown, during Hurricane Katrina, which has caused significance flooding of six of the levee districts and minor flooding of the remaining seven.

Once the water entered the Orleans Parish, the flood waters from Lake Pontchartrain were able to move through the streets to other portions the city relatively quickly; and the Corps of Engineers, as soon as the

breaches are sealed, will be able to begin pumping the water at a rate of one-half inch of water per hour.

In addition to levee protection, the City of New Orleans also contains a system of pumping stations which enable the City and the Corps of Engineers to dewater portions of the city when necessary. However, the lack of electricity in the City and surrounding regions has made the majority of these pumps inoperable, further complicating the issue of flooding in the region.

Currently, the Corps of Engineers is attempting to perform two tasks—to close up the two breaches in the levee system, and to restore power to the City to operate the pumps. Once the breaches have been sealed, and the pumps are operable, the Corps expects that it can dewater the region at a pace of roughly 1/2 inch of water per hour. The Corps may also purposefully breach non-vital sections of the levees surrounding the City to aid in the dewatering process.

The Corps has had difficulty, thus far, in sealing the existing levee breaches due to a height differential in water levels between Lake Pontchartrain and the City. (As of September 1st the lake levels in Lake Pontchartrain were 1 to 2 feet above normal, but falling at a rate of 0.05 to 0.10 feet per hour.) Recent reports suggest, however, that these levels are coming into equilibrium, and once that occurs, the Corps will have an easier time of repairing the breach.

As of September 1st the Corps reports that it has contracted with a pile driving operation to insert new piles in the breach openings, and is continuing to use sand bags to halt the flow of flood waters. The Corps is beginning with the 17th Street Canal and will then move to the London Avenue Canal.

SUPPORT FOR THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

As part of the National Response Plan, the Corps is executing missions in the areas of ice and water delivery to regional warehouses, emergency power assessment and generation, debris, removal, emergency roofing repair, temporary housing, and the unwatering of the City of New Orleans. The total value of the Corps mission assignments is \$135 million. A total of 505 Corps military and civilian personnel are in support of the FEMA missions. The 249th Engineer Battalion (prime Power) has 44 soldiers deployed and has initiated emergency power assessments of critical facilities.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND OTHER PORTS (AS OF AUGUST 31ST)

The Mississippi River is open from the Sea Buoy to Mile Marker 507 to tug and barge traffic only. Deep draft ships may move within anchorages if they have pilots on board. The GIWW is open from Mile Marker 177 (west of Harvey Locks) to Mile Marker 89 (east of the Harvey Locks).

The Ports of Mobile, Gulfport, Pascagoula, Pensacola, Destin/Panama City are closed. All bridges, floodgates and locks are closed in vicinity of the Port of New Orleans.

New Orleans and Mobile District crews are surveying the river from New Orleans to ocean (New Orleans) and the GIWW (Mobile).

Corps hopper dredge WHEELER is standing by in New Orleans ready to dredge as necessary. It is enroute to Head of Passes today.

Corps Dustpan dredge Jadwin is underway from Vicksburg to be ready for any dredging requirement.

Industrial Canal not open due to bridges being underwater, locks are operational with—auxiliary generators.

Baptiste Collette channel will be surveyed and dredged to offer alternate route around industrial Canal.

Port Fourchon will be surveyed and channel dredging, clearance of debris and vessels will be evaluated to ensure support vessels to offshore oil industry.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

In March, as the Subcommittee prepared an analysis of the President's budget request for the Corps of Engineers for fiscal year 2006. In this analysis, the Subcommittee highlighted the President's failure to adequately fund the Nation's water-related infrastructure, including the infrastructure constructed and maintained by the Corps.

The Subcommittee concluded that the administration's budget request failed to recognize that continued investment in the Nation's water-related infrastructure is a key element for simulating and improving the U.S. economy, as well as protecting the lives and livelihoods of those living in flood prone areas, alleviating the potential for tremendous economic and personal hardship.

The passage of time and years of inadequate funding for maintenance and replacement of Corps projects have taken a toll on the Nation's water related infrastructure, minimizing the utility of many projects, and setting-up the possibility for catastrophic failure of essential navigation linkages or flood protection projects.

While it is too soon to know what caused the failure of the levee system surrounding the City of New Orleans, the question remains, did the levee fail due to lack of proper maintenance or deterioration, and could this failure have been avoided with increased maintenance funding for the Corps of Engineers?

The administration's budget request for fiscal year 2006 marked the fifth attempt in as many years to cut funding for the Corps. This pattern of shrinking budget requests and repeated attempts to under-fund the Nation's premier water-related infrastructure agency, reflects a lack of commitment to addressing the economic, ecological, and humanitarian needs of the county.

In the fiscal year 2006 request, the total budget request for the Corps was 10 percent less (\$527 million) than the appropriation for fiscal year 2005. The greatest single programmatic cut was in the construction account, which was down 11 percent (\$207 million), with all on-going construction projects (with the exception of dam safety projects) facing a reduction or elimination of funding. This account includes funding for small flood control projects under existing authorities—a program that has been heavily subscribed in recent years.

In relative terms, the greatest percentage cut proposed in the President's budget was to the General Investigations account, which proposed a 34-percent reduction (\$48,7 million). This significant reduction would prevent the Corps from initiating or completing future project recommendations, and is part of the administration's stated objective to reduce the backlog of under-funded projects by slowing the rate of addition of newer projects.

Finally, and most troubling, was the administration's proposal to cut funding for vital operations and maintenance at Corps projects by

6 percent, or \$119,8 million, Facilities in the Corps' inventory are rising both in number and in age. This translates into a need to devote greater resources to protect the taxpayers' investment, and to make necessary engineering and technological improvements where necessary. Last year, the Corps' own estimates noted that the budget request for operations and maintenance would need to be increased by 50 percent to address delayed maintenance that is vitally needed, and will only cost more in the long term.

Without vital maintenance, Corps facilities run the risk of catastrophic failure, as may have been the case with the New Orleans levee system,

THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT AND
COASTAL LOUISIANA RESTORATION:

In July, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2864, the Water Resources Development Act of 2005. This legislation included an authorization for the first stage of the comprehensive restoration of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA).

The LCA includes about 30 percent of the Nation's coastal marshes, but about 90 percent of the coastal land loss in the lower 48 States is occurring in this area. Over 1 million acres of the Louisiana coastal area have become open water since the 1930's. Another one-third of a million acres could be lost in the next 50 years unless corrective actions are taken.

The Louisiana coastal wetlands exist in the interface of the freshwater from coastal rivers including the Mississippi River and the saltwater of the Gulf of Mexico. This area once included more extensive marsh and barrier islands that served as a protective zone and buffered the effects of large storms that would otherwise severely damage inland areas. This natural protective barrier has been severely reduced. There are thousands of oil and gas wells along the coast with an associated network of pipelines and channels causing saltwater intrusion into a fresh water environment, destroying thousands of acres of coastal wetlands, and increasing the process of land subsidence and coastal erosion.

In addition, the flood control and navigation projects that keep the Mississippi River in a single channel have cut off the freshwater and sediment flows that historically created the coastal marsh where the river has overflowed its banks. Channelization of the Mississippi River has also increased the velocity of the water, depositing sediment off the Continental Shelf rather than distributing it along the deltaic plain. This funneling of nutrient-laden sediment through a single river channel has also exacerbated a hypoxic condition (dead zone) in an area of the Gulf of Mexico.

There is approximately \$100 billion of critical energy, transportation, and industrial infrastructure in the Louisiana coastal area that is at increasing risk from storm damage if coastal erosion continues unchecked. This includes major ports on the Mississippi between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Port Fourchon, a major port for offshore oil and gas exploration, 1,806 miles of navigation channel, 42,000 oil and gas wells and 4,200 miles of pipelines, 2,500 miles of highways, several of the Nation's largest oil refineries, and over 300,000 acres of agricultural lands.

In the 1990s, the Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the State of Louisiana, designed a comprehensive project for the long-

term reversal of the loss of coastal wetlands in the State. This project, estimated to cost approximately \$20 billion over the next 30 years, was designed to restore thousands of acres of coastal wetlands by diverting water and sediment from the Mississippi River into the coastal areas of Louisiana, attempting to mimic the deltaic forces which originally created this region. In addition, the project would attempt to build upon the successes of the Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, CWPPRA, though a continuation of rebuilding strategic barrier islands and other coastal protections to provide further protection of the coastal region.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2005 authorizes the first installment of the LCA project, called the LCA Near-Term Plan. This plan, estimated to cost approximately \$2 billion over 10 years, would authorize the first five major projects of the longer term plan. In addition, this authorization would establish a process for the development of other future critical projects for the protection, conservation, and restoration of the coastal Louisiana ecosystem, as well as the selection of demonstration projects, and projects for the beneficial use of dredged material to test innovative technologies, models, and methods which may prove valuable in the future.

For the LCA Near-Term project, the cost share of constructing environmental restoration projects is 65 percent Federal, 35 percent non-federal. The non-federal partner for this project is the State of Louisiana.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM

In 2000, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved legislation to create the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration program. This program, established within the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and modeled under the National Estuaries Program, was designed to restore the ecological health of the Basin by developing and funding restoration projects and related scientific and public education projects.

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration program focuses on water quality concerns within the Lake, and not hurricane and storm damage reduction projects, which are performed by the Corps. However, as the Corps begins to dewater the City of New Orleans, the issue of water quality may be a concern because of the pollutants, such as domestic sewage and toxic chemicals, contained in the flood waters that will need to be discharged back into the Lake.

EXPRESSING SHAME AT GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I know that today's session was a formality, that there would be no votes other than a voice vote; but I thought it was important to be here, to show my support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in whatever way I could, however modest.

Martin Luther King said that we cannot walk alone. We are responsible for one another. We help others in need on the faith that when we are in need, we

will be helped. North Carolinians have twice faced desperate needs following devastating hurricanes in just the last decade. Other Americans have responded generously, both acting together through their government and in their contributions to private relief efforts. Americans are again responding generously to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

But, Mr. Speaker, I share the anger of many Americans at how shamefully inadequate our government's response has been. Tens of thousands of Americans are living outside the walls of civilization. They are without food, they are without water to drink, they are without medicine or medical care, they are without effective shelter. Mr. Speaker, they are without the protection against violence that law provides.

The failures that have led to that are not the failures of the last 4 days, but of the last 4 years. There have been repeated warnings that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast were vulnerable to precisely what has occurred, and yet our government was stunningly unprepared.

The President's press secretary was asked earlier this week about our Nation's response, our government's response to the hurricane, and he said now is not the time for finger-pointing. Earlier today on this floor the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) said now is not the time for finger-pointing. The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) has said now is not the time for finger-pointing. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) said now is not the time for recrimination. The gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) said now is not the time for recrimination or for finger-pointing.

They say that this is a time to grieve for the victims of the hurricane; and, Mr. Speaker, I do grieve for the victims of the hurricane. They say now is the time to help the victims of the hurricane; and, Mr. Speaker, I want to help the victims of the hurricane in every way I can. I am here today, and like millions of Americans, my wife and I are contributing to private relief efforts.

But, Mr. Speaker, there has to come a time for accountability. If there is not accountability for the stunning failures that we have seen in our government's response to this hurricane, we will fail again and again.

I know that this administration thinks that accountability is an ephemeral thing. If there is an attempt at accountability too soon, it is finger-pointing. If there is an attempt at accountability too late, then it is something you should get over. There is just a moment for accountability.

Mr. Speaker, tell me when that moment will be? Tell me precisely when the moment will come for accountability for the failures of our response, for the failures of our planning that have led to the devastation and the hardships that we are seeing now.