

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 2290

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 2290.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2241

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. REICHERT) at 10 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.)

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

CONCERNS REGARDING RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, we here in the Congress have just returned to conduct the Nation's business, and our

hearts are with the families and individuals who have lost loved ones and are scattered across this country as a result of the terrible, terrible devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

The House of Representatives this evening met with the President's Cabinet for nearly 3 hours, and this evening I would like to address concerns regarding how the institutions of this Nation failed the American people and what can be done about it as we try to heal as a Nation and thank those who are extending their compassion and assistance and to try to give strength to those who have suffered so much. There is not a single American who does not feel just horrible about what has happened, and we in the Congress bear responsibility, as does this administration, for the response and its shortcomings.

There is a story today in the Wall Street Journal entitled: "Behind Poor Katrina Response, a Long Chain of Weak Links." I would like to enter that into the RECORD and read from a key section of that article that talks about what went wrong.

□ 2245

Number one, the absorption of the Federal Emergency Management Agency into the gargantuan and terrorism-focused Department of Homeland Security, which I voted against as a Member of this Congress over 2 years ago; I served on the Committee on Appropriations where FEMA came before us. We had an agency that finally worked after 10 years of reform in the Clinton administration, and James Lee Witt, the director of that agency, did such a terrific job. All of that changed as FEMA was subsumed under this gargantuan Department of Homeland Security, which in essence had a very different kind of mission.

Just 2 weeks ago, as the Wall Street Journal article recounts, five State emergency managers brought a tough message here to Washington, this was before Katrina, and met with Michael Chertoff, the Homeland Security Secretary. And these emergency directors told them straight out that the administration was weakening emergency management with potentially dangerous consequences. In fact, Dave Liebersback, the Director of Alaska's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, said that the Department's focus on terrorism was undermining its readiness here at home.

The article goes on to say that there were not firm procedures in place, for example, for directing people and materials when a national emergency such as Katrina would strike. And this article, along with other information that I choose to enter into the record this evening, shows that the appropriations for the funding of FEMA, as part of this major new department, were actually cut by over \$600 million in the area of regional operations. These are bad decisions that need to be reversed.

The American people and we here in this Congress must do this.

A few years ago, when the Department of Homeland Security was being debated here in the Congress, I stated, and reread for the record tonight, "I do not want FEMA put in the Department of Homeland Security. Why? Because FEMA worked. It took us 10 years to fix FEMA back during the decades of the 1990s, so why do we want to stick FEMA into this big new department that will have 170,000 people in it, and we cannot even get direct communications up to the top? The United States fought World War II, and we did not need a Department of Homeland Security. We defeated the Communists during the Cold War, and we didn't need a 170,000-person Department of Homeland Security. We fought the Persian Gulf War, and we did not need it."

But our words were not successful here in the Congress. And we ended up with a majority of Members of Congress passing a Department of Homeland Security that buried FEMA far underneath this mammoth administrative structure. I hate to call it a management structure because it became a mismanagement structure. And then funding for local responses was cut by over \$600 million.

Interestingly, the Web site of the current Committee on Homeland Security here in the U.S. House of Representatives indicates a vacancy in the chairmanship, with the movement of Mr. Cox of California to the Securities and Exchange Commission. So even one of the key committees here in the House lacks the key chair as we move into this difficult period.

But the point is that there has been very bad decision making here in the Congress that relegated FEMA in terms of domestic affairs, and also, those put in charge over the last 5 years have had absolutely no hands-on experience with emergency management.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, the articles I referred to earlier are submitted hereafter for inclusion in the RECORD.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Some reasons why the U.S. didn't adequately protect and rescue its citizens from a natural disaster.

The absorption of the Federal Emergency Management Agency into the gargantuan—and terrorism-focused—Department of Homeland Security.

A military stretched by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which made commanders reluctant to commit some active-duty units nearby.

A total breakdown of communications systems.

Missteps at the local level, including a rudimentary plan to deal with hurricanes.

A failure to plan for the possibility that New Orleans's levee system would fail.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Sept. 6, 2005]
POWER FAILURE: BEHIND POOR KATRINA RESPONSE, A LONG CHAIN OF WEAK LINKS—CHANGING STRUCTURE OF FEMA, EMPHASIS ON TERRORISM CONTRIBUTED TO PROBLEMS—A SHORTAGE OF HELICOPTERS

(By Robert Block, Amy Schatz, Gary Fields and Christopher Cooper)

Just two weeks ago, five state emergency managers brought a tough message to a meeting in Washington with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and his top deputies.

"We told them straight out that they were weakening emergency management with potentially disastrous consequences," says Dave Liebersbach, the director of Alaska's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The department's focus on terrorism was undermining its readiness for other catastrophes, said the visiting officials, who included emergency managers from Mississippi and Alabama.

Now that Hurricane Katrina has left the Gulf Coast flooded and New Orleans in ruins, the question ricocheting around the nation and the world is this: How could the world's biggest superpower fail so badly in protecting and rescuing its residents from a natural disaster so frequently foretold?

The answer is sure to receive intense scrutiny this fall in Congress and around the nation, especially given revived fears that the U.S. is ill-prepared for a terrorist attack. "We are going to take a hard, hard look at our disaster-response procedures," said Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee this weekend as he assisted patients at the New Orleans airport.

Yesterday, the government moved aggressively to show it has the situation in hand. President Bush paid his second visit to the region in four days, visiting Baton Rouge, La., and Poplarville, Miss. He asserted that federal, state and local governments are "doing the best we can." The major levee breach in New Orleans, at the 17th Street Canal, was closed, allowing the city to begin pumping out floodwaters, a process expected to take about 30 days.

Meanwhile, thousands of federal troops appeared to be firmly in control of the city, with most residents evacuated and searches for survivors well underway. A Customs and Border Protection aircraft operating as a flying communication link gave first responders in New Orleans the ability to communicate for the first time since Katrina struck more than a week ago. In suburban Jefferson Parish, thousands of residents were allowed to check their homes under tight restrictions to evaluate what was left.

But the weekend's progress hasn't erased the troubling questions left by the government's delayed understanding of the scope of the damage last week and its initial slowness in mounting rescues and bringing food and water to stricken citizens. The problems include:

The decision to transform the Federal Emergency Management Agency from a cabinet-level agency reporting directly to the president to just one piece of a new, gargantuan Department of Homeland Security, which altered FEMA's mission and watered down its powers.

Too few helicopters stationed in the Gulf Coast area ahead of the storm.

A military stretched by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which left commanders near New Orleans reluctant to commit some active-duty units at nearby Fort Polk, La., because they were in the midst of preparing for an Afghan deployment this winter.

A total breakdown of communications systems, an echo of the problems that faced New York officials dealing with the 2001 ter-

rorist attacks and a system the government has been trying to fix for four years.

Poor coordination among federal, state and local officials in the days immediately before and after the hurricane.

Failure at all levels of government to take seriously many studies and reports over many years warning of the potential disaster.

Indeed, despite many warnings of the dangers, Mr. Chertoff and other administration officials have explained their poor initial response by saying government planners didn't expect both a serious hurricane and a breach in levees. "This is really one which I think was breathtaking in its surprise," Mr. Chertoff told reporters on Saturday.

Planners, he said, "were confronted with a second wave that they did not have built into the plan, but using the tools they had, we have to move forward and adapt."

Plenty of missteps at the local level contributed to last week's disaster too, from a failure to take basic steps to protect the telecom infrastructure to inadequate food and water at the Superdome. New Orleans may be able to stage events such as Mardi Gras and Jazzfest and provide parking, crowd control and adequate toilets for millions of visitors, but its hurricane plan was more rudimentary. "Get people to higher ground and have the feds and the state airlift supplies to them—that was the plan, man," Mayor Ray Nagin said in an interview yesterday.

But so far, the federal government is bearing the brunt of criticism, given its vast resources and unique role in responding to major disasters. Critics say the response shows that the nation's disaster-response system, rebuilt in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, is woefully inadequate. In a Washington Post-ABC News poll taken on Friday, the public said by a 67% to 31% margin that the federal government wasn't adequately prepared for Katrina.

"What the events of the last week have shown is that over the last few years since 9/11 we have slowly disassembled our national emergency response system and put in its place something far inferior," says Bill Waugh, an academic expert on emergency management at Georgia State University. "We reinvented the wheel when we didn't need to and now have something that doesn't roll very well at all."

Many of last week's problems are rooted in January 2003, when the Bush administration, urged on by some members of Congress, created the Homeland Security Department. It amalgamated 22 agencies, from the Coast Guard to the Secret Service, creating the largest government bureaucracy since the Pentagon was formed in 1947.

From the start, emergency experts and even the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, warned that a special effort was needed to be sure FEMA's traditional mission of providing disaster relief wasn't lost in the shuffle.

But it was. FEMA's clout had long depended on its ability to help states plan for natural disasters by providing emergency preparedness grants and other resources. Under Homeland Security, grant-making decisions were transferred to a new, department-wide office in an attempt to consolidate funding. As a result, FEMA lost control of more than \$800 million in preparedness grants since 2003, congressional figures show. State emergency managers and congressional investigators say the overwhelming focus for grants is now on fighting terrorism. More money goes to local police and fire departments for that mission than responding to and recover from disasters.

Officials from Shelby County, Ala., for instance, last year said they could get federal money for chemical suits. But they were un-

able to get money for an emergency operations center that could link computers, phones and televisions to respond to tornadoes. Between 1957 and 2003, the county had 20 tornadoes that it said killed 11 people and caused more than \$32 million in damages.

Meanwhile, morale at FEMA has dropped since it was subsumed by Homeland Security. Several key jobs are unfilled and its executives are overtaxed. Its acting chief operating officer in Washington, for instance, is also the director of FEMA's Atlanta region; his seat there is being held by another acting director. That area includes much of the hurricane-prone Southeast.

In July, Mr. Chertoff unveiled a departmental restructuring that would cement FEMA's reduced role. Among other moves, the plan restricted FEMA's purview to disaster response, stripping away longstanding functions such as helping communities build houses outside flood zones.

The plan, he told Congress, was "to take out of FEMA a couple of elements that were really not related to its core missions, that were generally focused on the issue of preparedness in a way that I think was frankly more of a distraction to FEMA than an enhancement to FEMA."

On July 27, Alaska's Mr. Liebersbach, in his role as the head of the National Emergency Management Association, an association of state emergency management directors, warned in a letter to Congress that Mr. Chertoff's plan was nothing short of disastrous. It would have "an extremely negative impact on the people of this nation," he wrote.

"The proposed reorganization increases the separation between preparedness, response and recovery functions," the letter said. "Any unnecessary separation of these functions will result in disjointed response and adversely impact the effectiveness of departmental operations." It was the letter that prompted the meetings with Homeland Security officials in late August.

Last week's response certainly revealed cracks in the current system. Though President Bush declared a state of emergency before Katrina made landfall on Monday, officials appear to have underestimated the severity of the damage caused by the storm. By Tuesday it became clear that the response was not meeting needs and that FEMA and Louisiana emergency teams were overwhelmed. Then the flood waters hit in New Orleans. It still took several more hours for Mr. Chertoff to declare the disaster an "incident of national significance."

Even then, some requirements hampered speed. Because of worries that terrorists could take advantage of such chaos, FEMA now must abide by post-9/11 security procedures, such as putting air marshals on flights. That meant stranded residents couldn't be evacuated from the New Orleans airport until FEMA had rounded up dozens of Transportation Security Administration screeners and more than 50 federal air marshals. Inadequate power prevented officials from firing up X-ray machines and metal detectors until the government decided evacuees could be searched manually.

In the hours before and after Katrina struck, there weren't firm procedures in place for directing people and materials. Dan Wessel, owner of Cool Express Inc., a Blue River, Wis., transportation company that contracts with FEMA to move supplies, said he didn't get a green light to send trucks to a staging area in Dallas until about 4 p.m. Monday, hours after Katrina made landfall. That was too late to meet a deadline of getting trucks to Dallas by noon Tuesday, he said.

Once the trucks arrived, drivers often found no National Guard troops, FEMA

workers or other personnel on hand to help unload the water and ice, Mr. Wessel said. "I almost told the guys to leave, but people are wanting the water," he said. "The drivers distributed it."

Inside New Orleans, said Dr. Joseph Guarisco, chief of the emergency department of Ochsner Clinic Foundation, a 580-bed hospital in New Orleans above the water line, said there was confusion about where to direct evacuees seeking shelter.

For a couple of days, Dr. Guarisco said, he directed a stream of patients to what he understood was a FEMA mass-casualty tent at the intersection of Interstate 10 and Causeway Boulevard. "A number came back and said, 'there's no one there.'" Dr. Guarisco said.

Some critics have blamed the war in Iraq, and the deployment of thousands of troops, including National Guard members, to that effort. President Bush has vehemently denied that charge. The administration has said problems on the ground were due to an unexpectedly severe storm and unanticipated flooding.

Four weeks before the hurricane, Lt. Colonel Pete Schneider, of the Louisiana National Guard, told WGNO, a local ABC affiliate, that when guard members left for Iraq last October, they took a lot of needed equipment with them, including dozens of high-water vehicles, Humvees, refueling tankers and generators that would be needed in the event a major natural disaster hit the state.

"You've got combatant commanders over there who need it, they say they need it, they don't want to lose what they have and we certainly understand that," he said. "It's a matter of us educating that combatant commander [that] we need it back here as well."

Col. Schneider also said the state had enough equipment to get by, and that if Louisiana were to get hit by a major hurricane, the neighboring states of Mississippi, Alabama and Florida had all agreed to help. In the end, those states were hit by Katrina as well.

The U.S. Army has a large facility, Fort Polk, in Leesville, La., about 270 miles northwest of New Orleans. Officials at Fort Polk, which has nearly 8,000 active duty soldiers, said their contribution so far has consisted of a few dozen soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division manning purification equipment and driving half-ton trucks filled with supplies and equipment. The first contingent of soldiers didn't receive orders until Saturday afternoon.

A spokeswoman at Fort Polk said she did not know why the base received its deployment orders so late in the game. "You'd have to ask the Pentagon," she said. A senior Army official said the service was reluctant to commit the 4th brigade of the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Polk, because the unit, which numbers several thousand soldiers, is in the midst of preparing for an Afghanistan deployment in January.

Instead, the Pentagon chose to send upwards of 7,500 soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas and the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, N.C., along with Marines from California and

North Carolina. Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division are able to deploy anywhere in the world in 18 hours. It took several days for them to arrive on the ground in Louisiana.

There, no piece of equipment was more necessary than helicopters. But in the first 48 hours after the levees were breached, the shortage of helicopters became acute. FEMA wanted choppers to save stranded residents, while the Army Corps of Engineers needed the aircraft, known as "rotary wing" in military jargon, to repair the breaches. The Coast Guard, the primary agency responding to the disaster in New Orleans, had a total of 20 aircraft in the area, mostly helicopters, which focused solely on rescue operations.

"We have very limited aviation assets and rotary wing is what we need to put materials into those breaches, and that's the very asset we need to do search and rescue and save victims, so our efforts became something of a second priority and our initial plan was delayed a bit because of that," says Lt. Gen. Carl Strock, commander of the Army Corps of Engineers.

A FEMA spokesman said the Coast Guard and National Guard had adequate numbers of helicopters on hand, but that rescue and supply operations were hampered by other factors, including limited airspace around New Orleans, which is geographically small. "You put in 30 helicopters in that area and you create a dangerous situation," said the spokesman, Marty Bahamonde.

On the supply front, helicopters flew food to the Superdome, he said, but the helipad there could only accommodate small aircraft, which couldn't hold many supplies.

Communications systems also broke down, as they did at the World Trade Center in 2001, preventing emergency officials from communicating with each other and the military. That led to the odd juxtaposition of top federal officials praising the rescue effort and denying problems at New Orleans' overcrowded convention center while TV cameras showed people there crying for help.

Flooding and power shortages appear to be behind most of the serious communications problems, but incompatible radio systems didn't help. Emergency responders in New Orleans and three nearby parishes all use different radio systems. New Orleans and nearby Jefferson Parish both use radios that operate on the 800 Mhz band, according to a Louisiana State Police interoperability report, but they were manufactured by different vendors. That means officials there had up to five channels on which to talk to one another.

"Communication is always difficult in emergency situations because of increased traffic," says William Vincent of the Lafayette Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, about 135 miles from New Orleans. Emergency 911 dispatchers in Lafayette fielded calls from New Orleans residents who still had working cellphones but couldn't reach local police.

New Orleans officials had equipment at the fire department's communication center that could link other otherwise incompatible local and federal systems. It was reportedly knocked out by flooding.

Another problem: Even after 9/11, local officials and federal emergency responders don't typically use the same radio frequencies, which can make communication difficult until agreements are reached on sharing channels.

As handheld radios began losing power in New Orleans, police officers and other emergency responders had no way of recharging them. Unlike radios used by firefighters combating wild fires, which can be powered by disposable batteries found in any grocery store, a typical handheld police emergency radio uses rechargeable batteries similar to those powering cell phones, according to Ron Haraseth, director of automated frequency coordination at the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officers.

FEMA itself seemed to frequently have bad information. At a Tuesday press conference Bill Lokey, federal coordinating officer for FEMA and the agency representative on site, downplayed the severity of the flooding caused by the breaches in New Orleans, saying the water wasn't rising in most areas. "I don't want to alarm everybody that, you know, New Orleans is filling up like a bowl," he said. "That's just not happening."

Within hours, much of the city was under water, and Mr. Lokey was calling Katrina the most significant natural disaster to hit the United States.

The possible problems had long been trumpeted. In June 2004, FEMA spent more than half a million dollars to commission a "catastrophic hurricane disaster plan" from IEM Inc., a Baton Rouge-based emergency-management and homeland security consulting firm. A report analyzing results of a mock hurricane hitting New Orleans, dubbed "Hurricane Pam," was envisioned and a response and recovery plan was to be drawn up.

During a five-day mock exercise in July 2004, emergency-management responders huddled in Baton Rouge to plan a response to "Hurricane Pam," a Category 3 storm which featured 120 miles per hour winds and a storm surge that topped New Orleans's levees. For reasons that aren't clear, the mock exercise never anticipated the levees giving way, despite such warnings. Even-so, the mock hurricane—destroyed 500,000 buildings in New Orleans and displaced one million residents.

The group developed a plan to get stranded residents out of the way and construction of a "command structure" with enough space for upwards of 800 rescue workers. A report, dated Jan. 5 of this year, detailed recommendations from the exercise and was provided to FEMA, an IEM spokeswoman said. FEMA has not released the report.

TITLE III: PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY

The DHS Emergency Preparedness and Recovery functions are intended to improve the nation's capability to reduce losses from all disasters, including terrorist attacks. Table 6 includes funds expended during FY2003 for these functions, and compares them to amounts requested for FY2004, recommended by each House, and approved by conferees in the final version ultimately enacted.

TABLE 6. PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY
(\$ in millions)

Operational component	FY2003 Enacted	FY2004 Request	FY2004 House	FY2004 Senate	FY2004 Conf.
Title III: Preparedness and Recovery					
Office of Domestic Preparedness	3,236	3,558	3,513	3,638	4,037
Basic formula grants (state and local)	1,006	—	1,900	1,250	1,700
Emerg. Wartime Supplement. (P.L. 108-11)	1,330	—	—	—	—
St. & loc. law enforce, terrorism prevent.	—	500	500	500	500
Firefighter assistance grants	—	500	—	750	750
Hi-threat, hi-density urban areas	700	—	500	750	725
Other assistance; national programs	200	2,558	613	388	362

TABLE 6. PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY—Continued
(\$ in millions)

Operational component	FY2003 Enacted	FY2004 Request	FY2004 House	FY2004 Senate	FY2004 Conf.
Counter-terrorism fund	160	40	20	20	10
Emergency Preparedness and Response	3,373	4,352	5,110	3,603	4,402
Admin; regional operations	798	165	169	—	171
Operating expenses	—	—	—	827	—
Prepare, mitigation, response & recovery	—	163	363	150	225
Public health programs	498	434	484	—	484
Biodefense countermeasure (current year)	—	890	890	—	890
(advance appropriations)	—	(4,703)	(4,703)	—	(4,703)
Biodefense countermeas. (10-year total)	—	(5,593)	(5,593)	—	(5,593)
Grant programs	169	300	200	165	180
Emergency food and shelter	152	153	153	153	153
Firefighter assistance grants	745	—	760	—	—
Disaster relief	776	1,956	1,800	1,956	1,800
National pre-disaster mitigation fund	—	—	—	—	150
Flood map modernization fund	149	200	200	200	200
National flood insurance fund	89	90	91	110	110
Disaster assistance direct loan program	1	1	1	1	1
Cerro Grande Fire claims	—	—	—	38	38
Misc. adj.; rescissions; transfers; rounding	-4	—	—	3	—
Subtotal: Title III (current year, net)	6,769	7,950	8,643	7,261	8,449

Note: Rounding may affect totals. Amounts for FY2004 do not include a 0.59% across-the-board reduction called for by conferees on H.R. 2673 (Consolidated Appropriations for FY2004), to which the House has agreed, and which awaits Senate action (see page 10).

Source: H. Rept. 108-169; S. Rept. 108-86; H. Rept. 108-280 (Conference report).

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

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

KATRINA DISASTER

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

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to join in the remarks of my colleague about the intensity of feeling that we have for the people of Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama and, of course, Florida on the first stop of Hurricane Katrina and the situation that has unfolded literally before our very eyes.

I should also take a moment to commend the journalists who have facilitated us being able to see what has unfolded. Part of what has unfolded is sheer incompetence on the part of this administration, and the feelings that the people are experiencing result from the fact that we have an administration who let the American people down, who let the people in Louisiana,

Mississippi, Alabama and Florida down, and just will not say We let you down. We made a mistake. They, instead, try to defend the indefensible.

Part of the late response comes from the fact that 40 percent of the Mississippi National Guard are in Iraq; 35 percent for those of Louisiana are in Iraq; 26 percent of the Florida National Guard are in Iraq; and 23 percent of the Alabama National Guard are in Iraq.

I have seen the interviews that have been done by Aaron Broussard of Jefferson Parish and Malik Rahim in New Orleans proper. Aaron Broussard said, "We have been abandoned by our own country." Investigative journalists sent information to me that Customs' Blackhawk helicopter pilots were livid because they were not allowed to rescue people.

And then in the matter of attitude, and of course, I will be speaking more at length on this on Thursday in a 1-hour special order, but in attitude, FEMA Chief Michael Brown had the nerve to say, No one was clairvoyant enough to foresee this happening. But there have been studies, there have been articles, and this is his job to foresee this happening. I have got articles from National Geographic and Scientific American all saying exactly what happened and what we witnessed unfolding. And then he had the unmitigated gall to say that people must take some responsibility.

Well, Mr. Brown, you need to take responsibility.

And, Mr. Bush, you need to take responsibility.

The Times-Picayune has called for Mr. Brown's firing, and I have to say that they are absolutely correct. And I would just like to ask this administration to just admit that they messed up instead of appearing before the American people with all kinds of excuses about what they did and what they did not do, and we are not going to revisit the past, we are going to make sure we move forward or we look forward. There are a million people who have been affected by this, dispersed all over our country. The State of Georgia has received and is receiving thousands of

them. The Fourth Congressional District is receiving as many of them as we can. The City of Atlanta has opened its arms to the victims of this administration.

With interest, I note, on the State Department Web site, that they provide us a clue as to when we are seeing misinformation, and what they tell us is that we are being misinformed when we are being told something that is clearly not true. What the administration has said to us tonight, in many instances, is clearly untrue.

And let me just say that it is unconscionable that the Secretary of Energy could stand before us tonight and say that he does not know how to bring down gas prices, which was the original reason that I asked for this 5 minutes tonight.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?