

in the fight for social and economic justice.

A tireless defender of democracy and human rights, Mr. Aguilar Zinser will be remembered as a true patriot, a true fighter for his country, and a friend to so many of us.

In recognition of his outstanding and valuable service to Mexico, I want to offer my deepest sympathies to his family and to his many friends around the world.

#### 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.

#### UNCOVER DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROBLEMS

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House of Representatives under suspension of the rules, that is, a bill with 40 minutes of debate total, no amendments allowed by any Member of the House for any reason, will vote to borrow on behalf of all the American people \$51.8 billion to begin the recovery, rebuilding and continuing the aid and assistance efforts subsequent to the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

Now, it is good that we are reacting and we are going to begin to fund the incredible needs that will arise and have arisen from this disaster. It is the beginning of a long process, and it is probably only a down payment. But some say that we cannot, as the House of Representatives or the legislative branch, examine the causes of the miserable response that caused unnecessary loss of life while recovery efforts are still ongoing.

Some say that we cannot question the work done by the administration and the appointees in place who failed to act adequately. They say that would be unseemly.

But during World War II, Harry Truman, in a Democratic-controlled legislature, chaired a special committee investigating the procurement scandals of a Democratic administration in the greatest crisis of our history, World War II.

We can do both. We can provide aid and assistance, and we can get at the root causes of unnecessary loss of life and unnecessary disaster. We can do that.

There are a number of lessons to be learned. We need to be able to respond better today or tomorrow. Hurricane season is not over yet. We might have another. Another might follow tragically that same path. That might be an incredible disaster. And we are going to have the same people in place, the same procedures in place. That is not going to be enough.

The terrorists are not going to wait. It has been 4 years since 9/11. We still do not have interoperable, secure communications that were identified as a principal problem on 9/11. The Bush administration zeroed them out in this year's budget, and the Congress has not yet seen fit to restore that money. I hope they will do that in one of these emergency spending bills.

Then there are the cuts at FEMA. The aggregate budget for FEMA during the term of the Bush administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has been reduced. We are not quite sure how much yet because we do not have the final numbers on this bill. I guess with this disaster assistance that will not be the case. But in terms of their preparedness and mitigation, it has been reduced.

The Corps of Engineers has hundreds of critical infrastructure problems, including the levee around New Orleans, underfunded and unfunded. I had a dam in my district that was failing, a flood control dam, with the largest cities in the State downstream. And the Corps of Engineers simply said, We do not have the money. Finally they scrambled around and they found the money. But, unfortunately, they were not able to do that in New Orleans for the Corps budget had been dramatically reduced.

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In fact, the Corps' own people predicted that this could happen because of the underfunding of the ongoing maintenance and the needed improvements in the diking system there, but all's well.

Deputy Press Secretary Trent Duffy said things are on track to privatize Social Security because we are going to borrow so much money for the disaster we are going to need to privatize Social Security. What? The Bush plan for privatization of Social Security requires borrowing more money. That is absurd. Then he says, oh, and the tax cuts are all on track, too. The tax cuts for the wealthiest among us are on track in face of a war and a disaster. Why? Because trickle-down will help the people of New Orleans.

How about Federal investment in the infrastructure that would protect the people of New Orleans and other cities around the United States of America? How about interoperable communications for our first responders across the United States of America? How about more money for disaster mitigation preparedness for FEMA? How about those investments before tax cuts for the wealthiest among us?

But they live on the high ground, and I guess they think they are exempt. They are not exempt. We are all in this together, and there should be some degree of sacrifice and level-headedness downtown. We are going to borrow \$52.8 billion tomorrow, adding to the deficit; and they are proposing more tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year and estates over \$6 million.

Come on, let us get real. Let us act on behalf of all our people. Let us in-

vest in our country and our people and do a better job against natural disasters and the potential for terrorist attacks. We need some changes. It should be more than 40 minutes of debate, and one or two amendments at least should be allowed.

#### HIGH FUEL PRICES

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

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that most Members spent time touring their districts in August, and I did as well. The major complaint that I heard was what probably most Members heard. That was concern about high fuel prices. We all know that fuel for automobiles, trucks, and airplanes have simply gone out of sight. One thing that we are not probably quite as aware of as a Nation is what it has done to agriculture, particularly where irrigation is concerned.

I talked to one Member of Congress who does some farming and irrigating. He was telling me that he had one center pivot that was powered by electricity; it cost him \$1,000. He had one center pivot that was powered by either diesel or propane; that was \$4,000. Same pivot, same size, and normally electricity would be higher than diesel or propane. So fuel has really eaten into the farm profits this year, and it is going to make farming very unprofitable for many people.

What has happened? Obviously, one major issue has been that global demand has increased. We realize that China, India, countries like these, have been industrialized, and over the last 4, 5, 6 years have been using much more fuel.

Number two, exploration has been curtailed. A 1998 executive order extended a moratorium on offshore drilling for 10 years. It is assumed that these areas would contain 75 billion barrels of oil and 362 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, but they are off limits. Federal law restricts access to resources in the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico. Drilling in ANWR has not been allowed; and so whichever side of the environmental fence you are on, whether you agree or disagree, it certainly has made it more difficult to meet our fuel demands. Natural gas prices have increased 83 percent over the last 3 years, and this will cost our economy roughly \$111 billion, and a lot of this is simply because of a shortage of natural gas, at least that is available to us; and we have a tremendous amount of it in Alaska and other places we are not able to get to.

Number three, refinery capacity has been reduced due to obsolescence. As a refinery gets old and equipment begins to go downhill, rather than being replaced, it simply is retired; and we have lost 30 percent of our refinery capacity since 1976. For the last 30 years,

we have been steadily losing capacity; and this, again, is mostly due to environmental regulation. We have mandated also 13 blends of gasoline. These are called boutique fuels, which add expense and time to fuel refining; and of course, in many cities, like Chicago, you may have to have three or four different fuel blends in a year. Every time you change a blend, you shut down the refinery, you clean the pipes and you start over again; and, again, that adds to expense. Katrina's destruction of refineries has pushed us over the brink. Obviously, just losing 5 or 10 percent, with such a thin margin, has made it somewhat inoperable.

Four, we have increased reliance on foreign oil, which everybody realizes. We are nearly 60 percent dependent on foreign oil at the present time. Much of this is from OPEC. So they can simply have a meeting, tighten the screws and prices go up. This contributes greatly, this dependence on foreign oil, to a \$670 billion annual trade deficit, which this country simply cannot continue to sustain. We have to get more energy-independent, obviously.

I guess fifth, something that is in everybody's mind, is has price gouging occurred? To be honest with you, I do not know. I do not think anybody at this point knows, but I do know this: E85, that is 85 percent ethanol, was \$1.60 in my State of Nebraska 4 weeks ago. Today, it is \$2.75, an increase of \$1.15 in 4 weeks. Katrina did not have anything to do with that because the cost of corn has remained low. All of the ethanol manufacturing is done in the Midwest, and so the hurricane had nothing to do with this issue. I think these are things that have to be looked into, probably by Congress.

The solution eventually, I hope, will be, what we have in our energy bill, will eventually provide relief, ethanol, biodiesel, solar, wind energy, nuclear, hydrogen fuel cells, and I think some additional refinery capacity; but it is all going to take time. This will be a difficult time, and I think Congress probably really needs to do some soul searching and look at some of the regulations we have placed upon ourselves.

#### KATRINA DISASTER RESPONSE

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, these last 9 days have been as difficult as any in our Nation's history. The devastation caused by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to the thousands of citizens from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama is, put simply, without precedent in this country.

The images that we have seen, that we continue to see, are unimaginable: people cutting through their rooftops simply to keep their families above the rising flood water; seniors in wheelchairs stuck in 110-degree convention centers and stadiums for days with

plumbing overflowing and no food or drinking water; parents desperately needing for family members to call them and let them know they are safe; unspeakable acts of lawlessness and violence.

We have seen ordinary citizens with shovels burying the dead, not because they knew them, but out of respect, because it was the right thing to do. Just yesterday, The Washington Post ran a picture of a body of a man who had died of seizures outside a New Orleans gas station, his dog lying by his side for 5 days.

So it is unsurprising that countless Americans from across the country have expressed their outrage at the slow Federal response to this tragedy. Indeed, the slow response and tepid leadership cost us many lives on the gulf coast. Thankfully, as we speak, our troops, National Guard, rescue personnel from across the country and ordinary citizens in cities across America are volunteering and giving to take in the homeless, continue the rescue. Heroism is winning out.

Indeed, of all the tragedies that have befallen our country and the gulf coast in the last week, perhaps the saddest is that we knew that this day was coming for New Orleans. Contrary to the President's assertions that this flooding was unexpected, scientists, Federal officials, and others had predicted the potential for a Katrina-like disaster for decades. In 2002, the New Orleans Times-Picayune ran the now-infamous five-part series exploring the vulnerability of the city, specifically addressing the possibility of massive floods drowning residents, destroying homes, releasing toxic chemicals throughout the city. Just days ago, FEMA Director Brown, Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff listened in on electronic briefings given by the staff before Hurricane Katrina had even touched Louisiana and Mississippi. They knew full well of the storm's deadly potential.

Yet they were unprepared to do anything about it. Last year, former director of FEMA James Lee Witt said as much, testifying before a panel I chaired outside of the Congress. He told the committee, and I quote, "Scientists tell us that we are going to be seeing more catastrophic natural disaster events in the 21st century than we have ever seen, more devastating. And yet we have destroyed the one agency that not only responds to those events but also works with State and local governments to do pre-disaster mitigation prevention before that risk could ever happen, to minimize that risk."

He went on to say that there were virtually no communications within FEMA itself and that it no longer had the communications channels or partnerships with State and local governments that it needed. Indeed, he said communications were virtually nonexistent between FEMA headquarters in Washington and its 10 regional offices. It took the submerging of one of

our most culturally vibrant cities to put Director Witt's words to the test.

So this is not about assigning blame at an untimely moment. It is about understanding what this administration has done to FEMA, which is a symbol of its priorities and underlying values. They have cut the heart out of FEMA, as they have cut the heart out of so much of our capacity to address our domestic needs and secure our homeland from terrorist threats, from natural disasters, from global economic changes. The reason why the head of FEMA is so speechless at this moment and why he must go is that he represents an approach that leaves us with our fingers crossed instead of with real vision for tackling the threats before America.

This administration and this Congress' answer to every problem is more tax cuts, mostly for the most privileged. They have left us saddled with bulging deficits, a diminished Social Security trust fund, weakened investments in our own people and communities, and that is why the Federal Government and the agency responsible for emergency relief failed to act and failed to lead.

I start by calling for the resignation of Michael Brown, the director of FEMA, as a statement by the administration and our country that we intend to face these challenges in a wholly new way. It is the only way we can honor the heroism that we are now witnessing in New Orleans, across the gulf coast, and around the country.

I make this request as a Member of the United States Congress and an American, not as a partisan. We need to unite now just as our volunteers, our police, firemen, troops are united in a common effort. That means accepting that we have the responsibility as a community to tackle the rescue and tackle the rebuilding of this part of our country. Those are the values that now govern in this period.

We must make sure that our budget priorities are reordered, not to reward greed but civic virtue. We must rebuild. We must give people the capacity to remake their lives, and it starts by getting this relief effort right. The new appropriations of our resources must enable people to get housing, get their families back on track, repair the levee breaches, pumping out the flood water, giving food and shelter. We must invest in New Orleans, but also in our infrastructure and environment and our people.

That is why America is so special, Mr. Speaker. We have to do so much in this institution, not measured only in dollars and in cents but our character and our compassion that is evident every day as we watch the heroism of the gulf coast. It is a time for leadership and heroism as well.