

are Americans. And for some of us, though, let me just say, for some of us, this is an America that we know very well, an America that is often swept under the rug by lawmakers and the media.

The truth is, there are almost 36 million Americans living in poverty in the United States. There are more than 15 million living in extreme poverty.

What does that mean? According to the Census Bureau, it means that a family of three is living on less than \$14,680 a year. They define extreme poverty as half of that. In 2003, the number of children living in poverty, this number grew by a half a million. Since President Bush took office, the number of poor people in America has grown by 17 percent. Is this the real state of this ownership society that we keep hearing about?

It is unacceptable. The Bush administration policies of tax cuts for the wealthy and cutting funding from the programs that provide for economic and domestic security in order to pay for this unnecessary war in Iraq are only making matters worse. That is why we must call for the President to develop a plan to eliminate poverty by 2010.

#### CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE LACK OF TIMELY RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise with indeed a heavy heart, as so many in America do. This is an extraordinary time in our country. My heart goes out to all of those thousands and thousands of people in the gulf area that have lost everything. This is one of our darkest hours, and let us hope some bright light can shine very, very quickly. But in order for that bright light to shine, Mr. Speaker, we must realize the importance of having an investigation quickly.

Let me hurry up and say that this investigation is not a blame game, because we already know where the blame is. It is for those individuals who had the responsibility. It has been a failure of leadership at the national level. Here in Congress, a failure of leadership. At the White House, a failure of leadership. The President, a failure of leadership. Our military, a failure of leadership. And our Homeland Security, a failure of leadership. In FEMA, a failure of leadership. And we must examine that now so that we can prepare quickly for the next disaster, because it is coming, or a terrorist attack. There have been mistakes after mistakes after mistakes. That is why we need a thorough investigation of what went wrong in the Federal response to Katrina, and why there was such a delay. Delay after delay after delay.

We must not try to skirt around and assume and put blame, unrighteous blame, on the city of New Orleans and their police department and mayor, who were victims. They were suffering from the flood. They were suffering from the hurricane. Here is a Category 5 hurricane coming at a city 6 feet below sea level and 30 percent of its population below the poverty level. Where was that plan? Their police departments immediately disseminated. Several of their policemen were killed in the flood. They were not able to do it. And then to hide behind and go to the Governor and say, where is the Governor in this? We cannot fault the Governor for this, nor the mayor. This was a national disaster, and the national leadership failed.

We must move quickly to get an investigation so we can determine what went wrong. The need for this investigation, like I said, is not simply to find blame, but it is to prepare us for future disasters and attacks. We cannot delay in this investigation, because time is of the essence. Questions must be asked and corrections in the system must be made while the timeline of the responses is still fresh in our minds of actually what happened and why, because we do not know how soon the next event will happen.

This was on television, Mr. Speaker, for everyone to see. We cannot run and hide from this one. And I tell my colleagues, in looking at the television, no matter what it is, this is not a Republican problem, it is not a Democratic problem; it is an American problem, and America is expecting us to stand up for America.

There are two essential questions that must be raised and answered. The first one is, why did it take the military so long? Six days. Bodies floating in New Orleans. Flooding up to the rooftops. People trying to get rescued. And on every television station, Fox News, Shepard Smith, my hat is off to him. Tears in his eyes saying, Where is our military? Where are people, Geraldo, cradling a baby, with tears coming down his face. Where is our President? Where is our Congress? Where is our FEMA? Where is our Homeland Security? A failure. We deserve to investigate this quickly, and get answers.

And then the other question, Mr. Speaker, that is on everybody's mind is this one: What role did race and poverty and class play in this?

We cannot hide behind the sensitivities of this. Some of these questions are very unpleasant. They were not created by you or me, but they are there. Those were black and poor people who feel that if those people were white, that would not be happening if they were white and middle class. I am not the only one asking this. African Americans are not the only ones asking this. White people, too, are asking this. We need an investigation to get to the bottom of this particular question.

And then this other question, Mr. Speaker: Why can an administration

who can, without a declaration of war, without authority from Congress, invade another country, topple its government, and then can do it in 24 or 72 hours, but it took them 6 days to respond to sick children and people on ventilators who had passed away. We have to ask the question, Mr. Speaker, because the great tragedy here is not Katrina, it is the tens of thousands of American citizens' lives that were lost because their Federal Government failed them. We owe it to the American people, Mr. Speaker, to quickly put together a commission, just like we did with 9/11, with subpoena power, and get to the bottom of this and fix it so that we can put back together and protect this country.

#### RELIEF EFFORTS FOR HURRICANE KATRINA VICTIMS

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud of what I have seen of what is happening not only in America, but also in my home State of Texas. I think we are all an America, where the tragedy occurred in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama last week, and the human and economic cost is unprecedented in our history. I know our Congress will respond to that.

We pray daily for those who have been affected by this terrible storm, and as we say in southeast Texas, "There but for the grace of God go us" in southeast Texas, because we have had our storms and our floods, and that is why I think we have been so willing to help, particularly in Texas as a whole, our neighbors to the east, mostly Louisiana, but possibly Mississippi and Alabama.

I rise to focus on the relief efforts for these evacuees, thousands of which are in my hometown of Houston, Texas. Getting folks out of harm's way is the first objective, and we then have to provide for them during the many months it takes to recover from this disaster.

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Today there are over 30,000 in four mega-shelters in Houston where Texans are being the best friends in need that they can be. The Reliant Astrodome, Reliant Center, Reliant Arena, and George R. Brown Convention Center are full or filling up with evacuees.

The American Red Cross has shelters around the area with an estimated 2,600 displaced persons, including Baytown, Texas. And the people of our area, whether in Baytown or across our county, are responding to this tragedy. Countless people are working long hours to serve, particularly, I know, a Baytown City Council member, Sammy Mahan, and Fire Marshal Bernard Olive who literally formed their own shelter and provided so much assistance to our neighbors.

Thousands more are in hotels and private homes across Texas and in the Houston area. There are about 100 seniors that have just moved into a senior housing facility in our district, and thousands more may end up in similar housing.

Some estimate in the Houston area we have about 100,000 to 150,000 total evacuees, maybe more.

The health care, food, and clothing and other needs of these shelters is and will continue to be enormous for a long time.

The charitable giving by individuals, nonprofits, and businesses has been overwhelming. Like 9/11, we are seeing Americans and Texans at their best.

However, most of the burden for caring for these new residents of the Houston area will fall on already over-burdened local governments. So we are relieved that FEMA is up with five disaster relief centers at some of the shelters coordinating the disaster assistance. But we need a lot more. We had 20 centers during Tropical Storm Allison in 2001.

Unfortunately, we are having a hard time caring for all the needy folks who live in the Houston area alone, so we are going to have to rely on the Federal Government to respond to this national disaster.

To show how steep the costs are, the city of Houston on Monday, Labor Day, met in special council session and put \$10,000 advance cost immediately for evacuee costs. This does not include our Harris County costs. And the amounts are so huge in other jurisdictions, the city has to rely on accountants from the Big Four accounting firms who volunteered to compile these expenses.

I understand our Federal disaster law has never been used to compensate States for such a massive relief operation for citizens who are not from our State.

There appears to be a significant amount of red tape for the money. There are several different ways to flow funds, through Louisiana then to Texas, or Texas may have to bill Louisiana, and then Louisiana gets reimbursed, and Texas may be reimbursed by the Federal Government directly.

In addition, the public health costs alone present a complex situation. And I believe Texas will need a public health emergency declaration just like Louisiana.

Many of these evacuees could already have or be susceptible to infectious diseases that thrive in our cramped conditions. That is why we are trying to move them out of these large facilities to apartments and homes as quickly as we can.

How can Texas afford handling the Medicaid and Medicare costs of Louisiana residents who fled to our State? We cannot even cover our own needy children as we would like to. That is why the Federal Government should pay, at least in an emergency, 100 percent of the Medicaid match in times of

emergency and national disaster. And tonight I am going to introduce legislation for that.

While progress is being made on the housing front, there is much work to be done, and the sooner housing is found, the better off for our health situation.

We need to figure out the best way to do this in an unprecedented situation. This event will be the largest charity and volunteer operation ever by Texans, and I think by our Nation. But we are stepping up to the challenge.

Many Houstonians worked through Labor Day weekend to provide the initial relief for our Louisiana brothers and sisters. Donations are pouring into our churches and charities across my district, our community, and our State.

Our religious community, it is great to see these daily meetings in the city of Houston with our Democratic city of Houston mayor and our county judge is a Republican, being problem solvers and dealing with our faith community. Our Catholic bishop and our Methodist bishop, churches of all walks of life are literally out there every day helping. However, local and State governments cannot be equipped.

Mr. Speaker, I know I have used up my 5 minutes. That is why I would like to put the rest of my statement in the RECORD. And I cannot say too much about being so proud to be a Texan, but also an American.

However, the local and State governments are just not equipped to deal with the scale of the situation. There is a reason that disasters like this are borne on the Federal level.

Therefore, Texas, like Louisiana, will need to be reimbursed for the local government costs of this operation. Otherwise Hurricane Katrina's impact will become ever wider as the costs spread ever outwards.

FEMA has been criticized for its red tape, but on this issue we have a chance to be proactive. Let's devise a financial strategy that keeps aid and relief moving as fast as possible.

If we need a legislative fix, then we need to find out now, rather than later. We will have at least two more supplementals to address the situation.

#### FEMA'S INEPTITUDE IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue a discussion I began last evening about who is responsible for much of the human destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. The Bush administration has been in charge of relief efforts, and it is clear they have failed the American people. Why were relief efforts so painfully slow to get started and, in fact, FEMA not on the ground after 4 days?

Meanwhile, trying to fill the gap of a failed Federal administration, our

thousands of first responders, volunteers, members of the National Guard and active duty military personnel and religious and committed Americans who are performing exemplary service and deserve the highest praise.

President Truman used to have a sign on his desk that said, "The buck stops here." Truly, the buck in this instance stops with the President of the United States. It is he who appointed the Cabinet and subcabinet level individuals tasked with organizing and implementing the plan to deliver timely relief to those in need, and they failed to do that. Yes, the President holds responsibility. His appointees hold responsibility. Specifically, these include the Director of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, and the Federal Emergency Management Director, Mike Brown, and several other individuals.

And it has been quite painful for me, as a Member of Congress who served on the FEMA Oversight Committee for a number of years, to witness the constant failures of judgment by this team, starting with the President himself when he took office, and importantly, early on in his administration, hollowed out FEMA, taking away its Cabinet status, saying that it should no longer be an independent agency that reported directly to the President, instead rolling it into the gargantuan Department of Homeland Security and tasking that with eliminating terrorism.

FEMA is tucked three levels down in this lumbering massive bureaucracy of 170,000 people which still cannot figure out how to answer a letter.

I voted "no" on that reorganization; was on the losing side when the President tried to pass that through Congress and was successful, and have now joined with my dear colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), to call for the removal of FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security in order to restore it as a fully independent agency headed by an actual professional with direct reporting to the President of the United States.

Now, the first person that the President appointed to head FEMA was his campaign director from Texas who ran the Bush campaign in the year 2000. His name is Joe Albaugh, and he accepted the FEMA position in 2001. And here is what he said back then. He characterized the organization as an oversized entitlement program, and counseled States and cities to rely instead on faith-based organizations like the Salvation Army and the Mennonites Disaster Service. As important as they are, those organizations are not equipped to handle a national disaster. Thank God we have them, but even they know they are not up to the task fully. So the tone was set back in the first Bush administration. And it is instructive to see how the President's appointees have been locked in over at FEMA.

We know that Mr. Chertoff, who heads the Department of Homeland Security, is an attorney. He has spent