

be taking in students. The University of Houston will be taking in Tulane students, and others are finding their way across our cities and States across America.

So giving the Secretary of Education authority to waive the amounts of student grants such as Pell and TRIO will be vital in terms of students who have to withdraw from school. Directing the Secretary of Education to immediately readjust how much these families are expected to pay will be vital toward continuing a child's education. Providing student borrowers who live in the affected areas with 6 months of deferment is vital for the survival of these families.

Might I say that I hope we will come to the floor again dealing with the under-21 age group. We know that there are thousands of children in the Texas area, in the Houston area under the age of 15. We have visited in those respective shelters, late into the night, visiting with families, with babies as young as 1 month old, children who are 9 and 10, 13, 14, and 15, who are now living their lives in temporary housing and/or in shelters.

There has to be a focus, possibly of a one-time grant, for the enormous impact on the children of this region, on the children of America.

So this first step dealing with the Katrina College Relief Act, and I applaud the sponsors of this legislation, leaders of this legislation, is just one statement that we are focused on America's children and America's future and that, in fact, those located in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and the impact regions have our attention. We will not only address the questions of education but we will also fix the provisions that will allow us to directly pay those victims so they can get housing under FEMA and Housing and Urban Development.

This is a good start. It is a plus direction for us to take. It is a unifying direction for us to take; but Mr. Speaker, we have many miles to travel, and I would like to be able to offer ultimately legislation dealing with the children who have been impacted by Katrina.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, I appreciate very much the very expeditious way in which the majority has approached this problem and look forward to working with them to seek an even more comprehensive way.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his cooperation in this. This bill represents a small, but certain, step toward comprehensive recovery; and I urge its passage.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BOUSTANY. I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask to be added as a sponsor of this legislation, and I have to ask before the gentleman finally closes it out, as a cosponsor.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mrs. McCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I support this bill.

Hurricane Katrina has devastated children, parents, teachers and schools from all over our country.

The school year has just started, and now thousands upon thousands of students have been displaced.

Those which are lucky enough to have been able to begin school in other locations are still dealing with the turmoil of being uprooted not only from their homes but also their community, friends, and classmates.

The instability of their situations must be incredibly difficult and painful to deal with.

Education is one of the most important things we can provide our students with, and it is so important to take care of our young people in this horrible time.

Yesterday we passed a bill which would provide a waiver for Pell Grants.

Today we are going to pass a bill which will waive other Title IV requirements to other programs such as TRIO, Academic Achievement Incentive Scholarship, Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CAMPIS), Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP/SLEAP), High School Equivalency Program (HEP), College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and the Robert Byrd Scholarship Program.

These are good first starts, but in the coming days we need to do even more.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3668.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3650. An act to follow United States courts to conduct business during emergency conditions, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the fol-

lowing title in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1634. An act to allow United States courts to conduct business during emergency conditions, and for other purposes.

TANF EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2005

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3672) to provide assistance to families affected by Hurricane Katrina, through the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3672

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. ADVANCE PAYMENT OF TANF BLOCK GRANTS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF FISCAL YEAR 2006.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 405 of the Social Security Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall pay each grant payable under section 403 of such Act for the first quarter of fiscal year 2006, as soon as practicable after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) EXTENSION OF THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2005.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Activities authorized by part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, and by section 1108(b) of such Act, shall continue through December 31, 2005, in the manner authorized for fiscal year 2005, and out of any money in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated, there are hereby appropriated such sums as may be necessary for such purpose. Grants and payments may be made pursuant to this authority through the first quarter of fiscal year 2006 at the level provided for such activities through the first quarter of fiscal year 2005.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) SUPPLEMENTAL GRANTS FOR POPULATION INCREASES IN CERTAIN STATES.—Section 403(a)(3)(H)(ii) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 603(a)(3)(H)(ii)) is amended by striking "September 30" and inserting "December 31".

(B) CONTINGENCY FUND.—Section 403(b)(3)(C)(ii) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 603(b)(3)(C)(ii)) is amended by striking "2005" and inserting "2006".

(C) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—Section 409(a)(7) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 609(a)(7)) is amended—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking "or 2006" and inserting "2006, or 2007"; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking "2005" and inserting "2006".

(c) EXTENSION OF THE NATIONAL RANDOM SAMPLE STUDY OF CHILD WELFARE AND CHILD WELFARE WAIVER AUTHORITY THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2005.—Activities authorized by sections 429A and 1130(a) of the Social Security Act shall continue through December 31, 2005, in the manner authorized for fiscal year 2005, and out of any money in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated, there are hereby appropriated such sums as may be necessary for such purpose. Grants and payments may be made pursuant to this authority through the first quarter of fiscal year 2006 at the level provided for such activities through the first quarter of fiscal year 2005.

SEC. 3. REIMBURSEMENT OF STATES FOR TANF BENEFITS PROVIDED TO ASSIST FAMILIES FROM OTHER STATES AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA.

(a) **ELIGIBILITY FOR PAYMENTS FROM THE CONTINGENCY FUND.**—Beginning with the date of the enactment of this Act and ending with August 31, 2006, a State shall be considered a needy State for purposes of section 403(b) of the Social Security Act if—

(1) cash benefits under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act have been provided on a short-term, nonrecurring basis, to a family which—

(A) has resided in another State that includes an area for which a major disaster has been declared under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) as a result of Hurricane Katrina; and

(B) has travelled (not necessarily directly) to the State from such other State as a result of the hurricane; and

(2) the State has determined that the family is not receiving cash benefits from any program funded under such part of any other State.

(b) **LIMITATION ON FUNDING.**—Subject to section 403(b)(3)(C)(i) of the Social Security Act, the total amount paid under section 403(b)(3)(A) of such Act to a State which is a needy State for purposes of section 403(b) of such Act by reason of subsection (a) of this section shall not exceed the total amount of cash benefits provided as described in subsection (a)(1) of this section, to the extent that the condition of subsection (a)(2) of this section has been met with respect to the families involved.

(c) **NO STATE MATCH REQUIRED.**—Sections 403(b)(6) and 409(a)(10) of the Social Security Act shall not apply with respect to a payment made to a State by reason of this section.

SEC. 4. AVAILABILITY OF ADDITIONAL TANF FUNDS FOR HURRICANE-DAMAGED STATES.

(a) **CERTAIN STATES MADE ELIGIBLE FOR LOANS.**—Beginning with the date of the enactment of this Act and ending with the end of fiscal year 2006:

(1) The States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama shall be considered loan-eligible States for purposes of section 406 of the Social Security Act.

(2) Notwithstanding section 406(d) of the Social Security Act, the cumulative dollar amount of all loans made to such a State under such section by reason of this section shall not exceed 20 percent of the State family assistance grant payable to the State under section 403 of such Act for fiscal year 2006.

(b) **FORGIVENESS OF LOANS.**—Notwithstanding section 406 of the Social Security Act, a penalty may not be imposed against any of the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama for failure to—

(1) repay a loan made to the State under such section on or after the date of the enactment of this Act and before October 1, 2007; or

(2) make any interest payment on such a loan.

SEC. 5. AVAILABILITY OF UNSPENT TANF FUNDS TO PROVIDE BENEFITS AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT NEEDY FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA.

A State or tribe may use a grant made to the State or tribe under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act for any fiscal year to provide, without fiscal year limitation, any benefit or service that may be provided under the State or tribal program funded under such part to support needy families affected by Hurricane Katrina.

SEC. 6. WORK REQUIREMENTS AND TIME LIMITS UNDER TANF PROGRAM NOT TRIGGERED BY RECEIPT OF TEMPORARY TANF BENEFITS BY FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA.

Benefits provided on a short-term, nonrecurring basis under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, during the period that begins with the date of the enactment of this Act and ends with the end of fiscal year 2006, to meet a subsistence need of a family resulting from Hurricane Katrina shall not be considered assistance for purposes of sections 407 and 408(a)(7) of the Social Security Act.

SEC. 7. WAIVER OF TANF PENALTIES IN HURRICANE-DAMAGED STATES.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall not impose a penalty on any of the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama under any of paragraphs (2) through (6), or (8) through (14) of section 409(a) of the Social Security Act with respect to a failure to comply with a provision of part A of title IV of such Act during the period that begins with the date of the enactment of this Act and ends with the end of fiscal year 2006, if the Secretary determines that the failure resulted from Hurricane Katrina or reasonable conduct of the State in addressing needs of victims of Hurricane Katrina.

SEC. 8. EMERGENCY DESIGNATION.

Each amount provided in this Act (other than in section 2) is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS).

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. McCRRERY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON), the committee members of the Committee on Ways and Means who are obviously dealing with that very difficult situation in their districts, for their input on this emergency legislation.

This is the first response from the Committee on Ways and Means, and it is designed to deal with immediate relief. We will have additional pieces of legislation that we will work with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle dealing with recovery and reconstruction, and these will come in a timely fashion over the next several weeks.

The reason we want to move this legislation as quickly as we can is because it will provide immediate payment of TANF's funds. We have included the extension of TANF to the first quarter of 2006, which immediately frees up \$4.2 billion in flexible funds to assist those families affected by the hurricane. In addition, it makes additional TANF funds available to the States devastated by the hurricane. We have a de facto contingency fund, and we have a loan fund. This turns the loan fund into, in essence, a contingency fund to provide even additional money.

Also, we do not want anyone worried about costs that are incurred as States adjacent to the disaster areas are pro-

viding assistance, and we are going to hold States harmless for costs incurred to immediately assist evacuees.

There are additional funds that are unused, and we make sure we maximize the flexibility available to States for providing assistance to families impacted by the hurricane.

□ 1300

In addition to that, although there are specific rules for receiving the funds, we want to make sure that during this assistance period that those rules do not become a barrier and that we will waive program rules for hurricane victims receiving the short-term TANF assistance.

Especially, for those States who do provide various supports, we want to make sure that where there may have been penalties triggered by decisions made, those certainly would not be applicable either.

We believe that with expeditious movement by the Senate and not extended debate on what we do or do not do, this will free up literally billions of dollars available to assist those people directly affected by the hurricane and those States and others who are assisting them with funds otherwise unavailable to them.

As I said, this is the first step. We will look at the recovery and the reconstruction phases, which will entail a more detailed examination of the Tax Code and assistance in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me set the stage of this discussion. When it comes to Hurricane Katrina, its impact and aftermath, especially on the poor, disadvantaged and the children, our most vulnerable population, let me sum it up. We do not know what we do not know.

Before us today is the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act. It is a marker, modest at best, meant to buy some time. I hope that is what it is.

We certainly stand with Representatives McCRRERY and JEFFERSON, two friends and colleagues who are at ground zero at this tragedy. We want to be as helpful as possible. I know that Mr. JEFFERSON is working on a comprehensive program for what is necessary in his district, and I think that will come forward as we go down the road a little bit.

It is going to be overwhelming, but in the process, we cannot act like we have done enough. The American people have had their fill of that kind of false rhetoric since this tragedy first roared on shore. As ranking member of the Human Resources Subcommittee, as a medical doctor and child psychiatrist, let me say we had better use the precious few months we are buying today to find out what we do not know and then address the real needs of real people. Band-Aids alone will not heal this wound.

We have more questions than answers, and we must act actively and aggressively to find out what we need to comfort the afflicted, heal the sick and mend the tattered bodies and minds.

First, we ought to add the word “temporary” to the title of this legislation. Here is why.

The legislation extends TANF, Temporary Aid for Needy Families, for 3 months. The 7th of December, it goes away. We are not sure we will even have a complete casualty count in the next 90 days.

This bill increases TANF funding for Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama by 20 percent in the next fiscal year. The truth is, we do not know what the real cost will be, and 20 percent may well become the proverbial drop in the bucket.

This is a time when people and local governments expect leadership out of the Congress. Arbitrarily increasing funding by 20 percent had better be a sign of our initial commitment, not a cap on our already inadequate leadership.

We are going to completely reimburse neighboring States that provide short-term TANF assistance. Not only is that the least we can do, we should not tell States in this legislation that the meter is running and will run out in 3 months. What about Arkansas, all the people that went up there? There is no mention in here about them. We do not need any more confusion and missed opportunities than we already have.

This legislation waives some TANF requirements and penalties. Let me ask everyone something: Who in the world thinks this is the time to add more bureaucracy? We ought to be waiving every requirement and penalty for the indefinite future. We do not even know where the people are yet; this aid bill could end up hurting, not helping, people who need America more than ever.

We ought to add another word to this legislation, “incomplete.”

There may be as many as 10,000 foster kids somewhere in the disaster region. Words like “displaced,” “abandoned,” and “alone” come to mind, and that ought to mobilize the conscience of the Nation. We do not know if these kids are safe, we do not know where they are, and we do not know if they are getting the services they need. We do know they have witnessed unspeakable horrors.

As a child psychiatrist, I know something about what these children are going through.

We ought to have a separate piece of legislation before us that focuses on these children. They will need grief counseling. They will need food, shelter, clothing and love. They will need guardians, and we do not even know today where they are.

The sad fact is that the current child welfare program dramatically limits services, including mental health, that these children can receive once they

are located. Does anyone think we need another bureaucracy for that?

Early estimates from the Congressional Budget Office tell us that a half million workers will likely qualify for unemployment compensation as a result of the hurricane. The Federal program was short-sighted and underfunded before. What will we tell these people when their benefits run out, their communities have been washed away, what, go look for a job?

This is not a time to wash away the Federal response. Benefits should be there as long as they need to be, period. How long is that? The answer to that is how long it will take to raise and restore these communities. Within 6 weeks, something like 11,000 people are due to lose their unemployment benefits. Let us not compound last week’s disastrous Federal response by ignoring another human disaster which we know is on the horizon. Those 11,000 people are out there right now getting their last check in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, we do not know what we do not know, but there is something we had better face up to. The poor, the disadvantaged, and children deserve an America of equal measure to the rest of the population.

For 10 years, the burden of care and compassion has been shifted away from the Federal Government by the Republican majority who wanted to create an ownership society by disowning those who needed us most. Programs like TANF and a host of other Federal programs that address human needs were cut, blocked, and shifted by Republicans who believed it was someone else’s responsibility.

For 10 years, the burden of care and compassion has been shifted from the Federal Government by the Republican majority who wanted to create an ownership society by disowning those who need it most. And is owning something more valuable than going to work every day and playing by the rules?

For 10 years, we have aimed to shift the lifeline for all Americans on the local institutions. Therefore, today there are different TANF and unemployment and foster care programs in each one of the 50 States and they provide varying levels of support that are too often inadequate.

I heard from the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) that children brought from Louisiana wind up in Arkansas needing health care because they were in an institution down there, and Medicaid in Louisiana says we will not pay for them when they are in Arkansas. So a Congressman has to intercede on the basis that he has to move the bureaucracy in the middle of this mess. That is what you get when you get 50 programs, all different.

America’s poor should be entitled to support no matter where they go in this country. They are an American. They are not a Mississippian or an Alabaman or a Louisianan. They are Americans, and we have got to get back to the principle that these should

be national programs that reach the entire country.

We do not know where the next tragedy will be, but for us to stand here and figure we are going to make these little minor adjustments here today, and we are going to vote for it, we will all be for this, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done out there.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I want to first of all take a deep breath before I begin addressing that diatribe.

The gentleman well knows that Medicaid is a program within the Committee on Energy and Commerce, that it is not within our jurisdiction, and we obviously are working with other committees.

The gentleman also knows that the program that he just denigrated was signed into law by President Clinton, and the vote in this House was more bipartisan than the vote on Medicare in 1965. In addition, we have an unemployment law that has been on the books since FDR that provides the 26 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I said in my opening statement that this was the first, immediate response and we will have additional legislation addressing unemployment. And the extension of unemployment is obviously going to be in the next piece of legislation.

I do want to urge my colleague from Washington to join me at lunch so that he perhaps could have something other than sucking lemons for lunch prior to coming to the floor to address this House.

I will also respond to his comment about the fact that Arkansas is not mentioned. In the legislation on page 4, line 14, it says “a State,” and it defines any State that responds to the needs. It does not name State by State. If in fact the circumstances are provided, given the facts, then that State receives the programmatic changes that we are offering in this legislation.

I do appreciate the gentleman’s last sentence in which he said he plans to vote for the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3672. First, let me echo the sentiments of so many of my colleagues that have already been expressed here today to the victims of this terrible tragedy. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. You will continue to be in our prayers as you work to recover from the devastation this hurricane has wrought and to rebuild your communities. We hope the steps we take here today will provide a measure of help in that incredibly trying process.

This legislation is designed to assist States provide for the immediate financial needs of thousands of families

affected by Hurricane Katrina. I am honored to support this bipartisan bill introduced by my colleagues, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON). Unfortunately, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) cannot be with us here today since he is in Louisiana with the Vice President, helping coordinate the ongoing response to the hurricane.

The purpose of this legislation is simple: to clear any obstacles that stand in the way of quickly getting money into the hands of the hurricane victims. The legislation before us now addresses the needs of families who either have been on welfare or might need to go on welfare as a result of the hurricane. It ensures that States have the resources to help them, and it removes the bureaucratic obstacles that might otherwise stand in the way.

In terms of funding, this bill immediately makes available more than \$4 billion in Federal welfare funds which States would otherwise have to wait until October to access. So States have that money to spend now when so many families are in need in the region.

It provides additional Federal funds for the hard-hit States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and it reimburses other States for the cost of providing emergency benefits to the many families that have left the States directly in the path of the hurricane.

To ensure families can focus on getting their lives back together and States can focus on providing immediate help, this legislation also waives program rules that might otherwise tie States' hands in providing for the immediate needs of affected families.

Mr. Speaker, these changes provide more State flexibility in meeting the needs of families, including for basic cash assistance right away. And as communities start to get back on their feet, this flexibility can and should be used to help parents find and keep new jobs to support their families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to support this important legislation.

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Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN).

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, when you have underfunded programs that have too many mandates on the States to use the funds with too many restrictions, what ends up is that people who are vulnerable, who are at risk are the most likely to get hurt by these underfunded programs. Hurricane Katrina showed us in graphic detail the people who were victimized because we did not adequately fund programs and government.

I support this legislation, but much of what is in here should have been

done prior to now. For example, this will be the 11th temporary extension of the TANF program. We should have reauthorized the TANF program well before this day. We talked about a 20 percent increase in funding in certain States. Well, just the cost-of-living changes since when this bill was first enacted in 1996 would have eaten up that amount. We should have adjusted the amounts well before this, not just for the affected States but for all the States in this Nation.

I am pleased to hear the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means indicate that there will be other legislation, because I agree with the gentleman that the unemployment insurance issues, with 11,000 people running close to the exhaustion of benefits, need to be addressed; and I look forward to working with the chairman so we can deal with the unemployment insurance, which was not necessarily anticipated except by this storm.

Let me say in regards to the foster care children, which are also under the jurisdiction of our committee, foster children are our responsibility. They are now being scattered to many States around the Nation. We have a responsibility to make it easier for these foster children to be cared for during this period. I say to the chairman, I hope we will be able to work on a bill related to foster care.

Let me lastly mention child care, because there are not going to be enough funds available to our States to take care of the increased needs for child care in our communities. I hope our committee will also deal with that issue.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the body an example that I think is citing a very fine example in my own congressional district. In the city of Palm Beach Gardens, they are putting out feelers in order to hire people out of these shelters, hire people out of the stricken areas, to bring into the city of Palm Beach Gardens, hire them and give them meaningful jobs. This is something that I think we should be looking at all across the country.

These poor people in the stricken areas of the hurricane are going to go home to find there are no jobs to go home to. There are going to be business failures, small businesses. People are going to be losing property to mortgages because of the loss of income.

So this is something where I think we can bring these stories back to our own hometowns all across this Nation, that there is a huge pool of talent out there which is just going to be idle. They are not going to have jobs, and I think that some recruiting going into

this area would be very helpful, and it would certainly be in the great tradition of this country.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in support of this legislation for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, indeed, the neediest families.

We are witnessing right now how the national principle in America plays out. If there is an earthquake in California, the rest of the American family comes to the assistance of those in need. If there is a hurricane in the gulf, the rest of the American family helps those in need. If there is a blizzard in New England, the rest of the American family comes to their assistance.

In fact, this legislation makes good initial progress in adjusting the TANF program to the needs of families affected by Hurricane Katrina. But it does not get us all the way there, and we know that. It does make a respectable first step.

It provides a 3-month extension of TANF funding for the entire country and allows States to receive advanced payments. It also includes a provision to increase fiscal year 2006 funds for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama by 20 percent. It alleviates some of the strain on neighboring States. Let me say a good word about those citizens across the country who have reacted so favorably to those in need in other States. It also provides an opportunity to extend in the future a discussion at least about the whole notion of unemployment benefits. I think that is going to be terribly important as well.

More broadly, we are going to have to examine the safety net programs to make sure they are poised to catch the families before they fall even more, especially in the areas of unemployment benefits, child care assistance, and foster care. This bill, while silent on those issues, I know will be addressed in coming days and weeks.

Let me say something else as well. The reason we should have kept the surplus we had as a cushion was for three reasons: international conflict, in which we are engaged in two wars; a devastating natural disaster like this hurricane; and what is surely going to be the need in the near future to help those families who find themselves in a horrific situation through no fault of their own. That is the reason the surplus should have been maintained. That is the reason there should have been a cushion that was kept, rather than what we will do now by going off budget for many proposals down the road.

So we all stand in support of our friends and family members in this stricken area of the country. It does, as I indicated a moment ago, highlight the national principle that makes America special.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON), a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me time. I want to congratulate the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) of the Committee on Ways and Means and also the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) for bringing a very important bill to the floor very promptly.

In spite of the comments of my friend, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), the ranking member of this subcommittee, TANF has reduced poverty among minority children in America more than any program ever adopted by Congress. It has been an enormous success in helping families get into the workforce, raise their incomes, and reduce the poverty level among children in our country.

So now to open TANF for those families devastated, devastated, by this natural disaster, is extremely important, because these are families now, like so many of our own children, living paycheck to paycheck, who have no paycheck and no assets. And that is today's problem. By bringing them immediately into TANF, they can get a paycheck. They can get cash assistance.

But, better than that, though nothing is better than that when you have no cash and you have a bunch of kids, but equally important is that it brings them into a system that is set up, that is structured, that is skilled, that is dedicated, that has people in it that know and understand it, who can help them with employment, who can help them with day care vouchers, who can give them transportation vouchers, who know what it takes to help a family get on its feet economically. And that is the challenge they face.

So this is a very important component of responding to the immediate needs of the families wiped out by this unprecedented, devastating hurricane.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that we are doing this right now. We are going to hold the States who open their TANF system to refugees harmless to the costs. We will be able to fund that from the contingency fund we have already put in place. We will be able to do this, meet immediate needs, and help those families to respond to opportunities like the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) just mentioned.

This is exactly what we need right now. We cannot see the whole problem yet; and it would be irresponsible to do anything but use the resources already at our disposal, resources that are experienced, savvy, and directly meet the needs for both cash assistance and opportunity for these families to rebuild their lives and receive the services they need.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this good piece of legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my sorrow for the tragedy that has struck the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama; but I also want to express my sorrow that we are not learning from this tragedy. Have we not seen firsthand this week just how much help is needed for the most vulnerable people in our Nation? We are seeing it as they are victims of Katrina: the elderly, the disabled, the poor, particularly children. Of course, we must do everything we can to help overcome the challenges in the short term. But we must also address the long-term needs of the most vulnerable in this Nation.

This bill is short term. I will support it, but it leaves so very much undone. Of course, we need to give States immediate access to funds, funds that they otherwise would not have received until October 1. We need to provide emergency funds for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama; and we need to reimburse other States for emergency cash assistance that they are providing for evacuees. This bill does those things.

But there are many things it does not do. For example, it does not address the pressing needs of children in foster care, the unemployed and parents who need child care, and it does not address child care needs that are even more critical than ever for parents of young children, parents who are trying to find jobs.

As I said, I will support this bill, but I am concerned that we are responding to Katrina with this bill, and others, both literally and figuratively, by helping the victims bail out the water, but not fixing the holes in the infrastructure that lets the water in. We need to do both, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for bringing to the floor so promptly this very important stop-gap legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act. This legislation provides immediate critical assistance to the families who have been gravely facing the overwhelming hardships in the aftermath of the worst natural disaster in our history. The States which have been affected under this bill would see a 20 percent boost in TANF funds through 2006. This is an increase of \$83 million for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. As a Pennsylvanian, I think that is only fair.

In the last few days we have seen an outpouring of support from every re-

gion of the country. This legislation immediately releases \$4.2 billion in TANF funds for payments to all States, funds which would not normally be available until the first quarter of fiscal year 2006.

The legislation waives current spending restrictions for all States when delegating unspent prior-year TANF funds. This means that the States affected by the hurricane and the States lending a helping hand will have the flexibility to spend their funds on what they need at this particular time. States will also have access to \$2 billion in TANF contingency funds so that they can provide emergency cash assistance to evacuees.

We are also providing that the affected areas would be available to adapt by waiving the work requirements and time limits for hurricane victims receiving short-term TANF assistance. By waiving these program rules, families will be able to focus on rebuilding their lives.

We recognize that the number one priority for the families devastated by this hurricane is to make sure that their families are safe, that they have even the basic necessities of life. The number one priority for us in Congress is to provide the necessary relief to make this happen, and this legislation moves that process forward.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Orleans, Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON).

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and I thank the chairman and the members of our committee who have brought this legislation forward.

□ 1330

Louisiana and New Orleans, in particular, and the entire Gulf Coast region face a horrific set of challenges. They can all only be met by extraordinary action by this House and by its Members. The compassion that Members have shown, the prayers that have been extended, the helping hands across the country have been absolutely unheard of before; and the level of support that we are getting in New Orleans we are thankful for.

This TANF program is going to provide some flexibility that we need now to help reach the needs of our people for cash assistance and for other assistance, for the flexibility that we will need to take care of our evacuees and some of the areas and families that have been so devastated by the hurricane.

But as the President said, and as I think we all know, this effort, while it is good and while it is necessary and while it is timely, is a down payment of what we have to do here because the devastation has been so extensive.

So everything now that we do we must think outside of the ordinary. We must think outside of the usual set of issues we face in disasters, and we must think differently, more deeply,

more broadly, more innovatively, and more compassionately than we ever have before to make these programs work for people who are living lives they never thought they would have to face, people displaced from home, having no connection to their home place at all. The psychological trauma, the mental stress that they are under, apart from the disconnection from families, all of these are matters which are deeply distressing and disturbing and unusual.

So I thank the Congress for taking the steps it is taking today. I thank Members on this side. I thank the Republicans on the other side. I thank all, without regard to party, for stepping up to work on this matter today. And I look forward to all of us remaining engaged on these issues so that we can find a way to really address the needs of people, many of whom were very disadvantaged starting out and of course are simply disadvantaged beyond all belief now.

So I thank them for what they are doing. We look forward to it, and I hope all will understand that we will have to come forward with a full recovery plan for our area that I hope this Congress will embrace.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

(Mr. HAYWORTH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, this morning's Arizona Republic carries encouraging news amidst the horrific challenges encountered by the colleague who preceded me on the floor and so many fellow Americans. It is the story of Doyle Smith and family. Doyle has six children, and yesterday he walked through and was given the keys to a five-bedroom home donated rent free to his family for the next 6 months. He says, "This is going to be the beginning of a beautiful start. It really is." And his 6-year-old daughter, Annalyce, walked from room to room saying, "I love it. I haven't been in a big house like this."

Mr. Speaker, America has never encountered a natural disaster as big as this, but what has been reaffirmed from coast to coast is that Americans have big hearts and Americans step up to help other Americans. That has been demonstrated by the people of the Fifth Congressional District of Arizona who have called me personally, who have called our district office, who have called our Washington office saying, How can I help? I want to step forward. And it happened also to an Arizona couple, Jeff and Marie Whiting, who had purchased a guest house, saw a need, and decided to donate this house rent free to the Smith family. This is what Marie says: "We are actually making a difference. If we reach across America and touch each other's hands, we can meet needs."

Mr. Speaker, as representatives of Americans here in the people's House,

we stepped forward to meet the needs of those who are the neediest among us. This legislation, H.R. 3672, the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005, gives the States, States like my home State of Arizona, where we see people reaching out to their fellow citizens, the flexibility needed to get benefits into the hands of these who have suffered from the hurricane so that those needy families can get back on their feet without long delays because the State might fear it would not be reimbursed for the funds spent.

We have put in place, or we will put in place, with this legislation even greater flexibility so that we step forward on a greater magnitude to take the actions that the people of our Nation demand as a compassionate society. This legislation puts the funds forward, has the flexibility there, and the accountability necessary.

Is this an imperfect world? Yes. Has it been the goal of our Founders and now our generation to form a more perfect Union? Yes. Will this legislation help those who need the help? Yes.

Support this important legislation.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, but I would beg our committee to also give flexibility to the States for people who are not victims of the hurricane. And let me tell them why.

I come from the State of Ohio where the city of Cleveland was deemed the city with the highest poverty rate in the Nation, and the State of Ohio has \$1.14 billion left in their TANF fund as a surplus. There is something wrong here if we have the largest city with the highest poverty rate in a State with all this money. There is either something wrong with the administration by the Republican-led Governor's office or the stringencies of the requirements do not allow them to be flexible enough to take care of the poorest people in the State of Ohio.

I am for helping all the people who are victims of the hurricane, but this is a clear example of how poverty in the United States runs rampant and there is money there to help them, but somebody is not using it right.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a much needed piece of legislation; so let us pass this bill and then move on to the more pressing question of how to craft a long-term solution as part of a full recovery plan for all those affected in the gulf States. We need to do more to try to provide flexibility to the States so they can use these funds quickly, but at the same time we have to make sure that we are not hampering these States

from doing what they believe is best for all of the victims that have suffered as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

I hope that we are able to work in a bipartisan fashion to move forward legislation which will address the needs of people who are unemployed today, they were unemployed before the hurricane, and now will suffer even more difficult times trying to find work, along with those who have now been displaced as a result of the hurricane.

I hope that we will deal with the fact that there are many legal immigrants in this country on their way to becoming citizens who, under the current law, would be constrained from being able to be assisted by these TANF dollars unless we provide the States with flexibility to do so.

Everyone is a victim regardless of their color, regardless of where they came from. If they were there, they are a victim. And I hope that this Congress can move quickly not just to do what is needed now but into the future.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Committee on Ways and Means and all of those who helped to move this bill to the floor. This is very important, but it is but a beginning by our government in an attempt to meet the needs of this awesome disaster. More must be done, and I am hopeful that everybody understands that we have got to keep working.

I have traveled to these shelters in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Alexandria, Opelousas, and New Iberia; and I ran into many of these welfare recipients, who, of course, as the Members know, live day to day and did not have money at the end of the month oftentimes, and they are really frightened. They do not know what is going to happen to them. And this will help. This will help with some cash assistance.

But I want the Members to know there are a lot of other questions about what is going to happen to them, for example, those who would be rolling off welfare because they are at the fifth year. That is not addressed here. Some other things are not addressed.

Again, I am very grateful for this. I am going to support it. But I will certainly be here helping to provide another voice to say that there is more that must be done. Mr. Speaker, as we do this, let us all remember that they are in these shelters. Some people are living with 5,000 other people. We have got to get them out, welfare recipients and other people who are there. This work is awesome, but we can do it.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the chairman seems to think that if somebody is upset by this, they ate lemons for lunch. My belief is when we are dealing with the problems

in the three States with the lowest unemployment insurance rates, the three lowest TANF rates, with a city that had 38 percent of the children living in poverty when this started, we are dealing with a problem which we should have dealt with long ago.

This Band-Aid today is nothing more than that. There should be a comprehensive dealing with this issue, and we should be all ashamed of the fact that that situation exists in this part of the country.

The next issue we are going to have to face, and I have not heard a single person mention it, is the cost of gasoline. If we can give food stamps to people in this country, we ought to begin a gas stamp program so that poor people who have to drive to work can afford to fill the tank and get there.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the bill we have under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORBES). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I will say for the third time during this debate this is the first piece of legislation 2 days after we came back. We are responding with the maximum flexibility for money available on an immediate-relief basis. Clearly over the next several weeks as we examine the problems and are able to write legislation responsive to those problems, we will continue to bring legislation to the floor.

I would urge my colleagues, as they express their concern about what has not been done, that they should urge their colleagues on the other side of the Capitol not to engage in an exchange of legislation in which, on this initial humanitarian relief provision, they want to try to outdo each other. The most important thing is to get this out of here and make it available as soon as possible.

Over the next several weeks, we will be working with those Members and on this committee, principally the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCREERY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON), who have already provided invaluable assistance and who are very supportive of this legislation, with additional legislation. I look forward to working with colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are willing to come forward in constructive ways in making adjustments.

I do want to underscore the fact that we are nearer to the beginning of the hurricane season than we are the end of the hurricane season.

□ 1345

No one wishes another hurricane to touch the United States, but no one

knows for certain that that will not happen, that as we are assisting those individuals who have had a very tragic occurrence, we are laying the groundwork for the possibility that we have to repeat this more than once.

I want to thank those colleagues who will help us move this expeditiously and in advance of the assistance on additional legislation dealing with more fundamental revisions in the Tax Code and extensions of various deadlines. I thank them for their cooperation, and I look forward to producing additional legislation that will be available for my colleagues' consideration.

Let me underscore, we need the other body to move immediately and not engage in attempts on this very first effort to expand and explore more fundamental changes in programs. So I plead with my colleagues here and on the other side of the Capitol, we have had enough talk, let us show some action.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, which would provide assistance to the victims of Hurricane Katrina whose employment and training have been disrupted as a result of this tragedy.

The level of devastation we are witnessing in the Gulf Coast region is truly staggering. Our prayers are with the residents of the region, as well as all those working on the relief and recovery effort. All of our colleagues from the region—including two of my own on the Education & the Workforce Committee, Mr. JINDAL and Mr. BOUSTANY, as well as Mr. MCCREERY, the author of the legislation we are considering today—should know our thoughts are with them and their communities as well.

I commend the gentleman from Louisiana, Representative MCCREERY, for crafting this important legislation in short order. It will make a world of difference for many families in the region as they struggle to retain some sense of financial stability.

In order to deliver the quickest possible economic assistance to families in need across the country, the measure before us provides all States immediate access to their next quarter's Temporary Aid to Needy Families (or TANF) funds. That means \$4.2 billion in flexible funds would be distributed to all States right away, rather than waiting precious weeks until the start of the next quarter. This legislation also would provide welcome relief for affected states in the form of a 20 percent TANF increase for the coming fiscal year.

This bill also takes the prudent step of waiving work requirements and time limits for residents in need of short-term TANF benefits as a result of the hurricane. Our primary concern right now is ensuring that families in that region can focus on putting their lives back together, as well as allowing States to focus on providing immediate assistance to those in need. Scores of families in the Gulf Coast region have endured enough pain and worry already, and this measure will provide them the peace of mind that these important benefits will be available when they need it most—and without added burdens when they need them least.

Mr. Speaker, we have made substantial progress over the past week, both in the recovery efforts in the South and in our own legislative efforts here in Washington. This bill marks another step in the long process that

this Congress will undertake over the coming weeks and months to address the needs of all those impacted by the tragedy.

Once again, I thank Mr. MCCREERY for his work and I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this bill.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3672, the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act. This bill is a modest first step towards assisting the states so severely effected by Hurricane Katrina and the many poor and underserved Americans who rely on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

This bill will extend TANF in a number of ways that will aid those in need along the Gulf Coast and those states who have taken in the evacuees from this disaster. It will extend TANF funding for the entire Nation for the next 3 months and allow States to receive advance payments. Additionally, it will increase TANF funding for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama by 20 percent. It will also provide flexibility to neighboring states for reporting requirements and in using TANF contingency funds and unspent prior year TANF funding for assisting disaster evacuees. Finally, it waives work requirements and time limits for hurricane victims in need of short-term assistance.

While this legislation is a good first step, its focus is short-sighted and fails to consider the months and years that will be required to return the Gulf Coast to normalcy. It fails to address the need for child care assistance for evacuees trying to find some form of employment to support their families. There are likely to be thousands of children in need of foster care or family support services and this bill fails to address that need. It also does nothing for the roughly 11,000 jobless workers in the Gulf Coast region who are within 6 weeks of exhausting their regular unemployment benefits.

The haunting images we have seen on the news should be a wake up call to Congress that millions of Americans are still stuck in a cycle of poverty. Just last week, the Census Bureau released data that showed income for the typical American family fell by \$1,670, 5.4 million more people slipped into poverty, and 6 million more joined the ranks of the uninsured. These are the issues that should be at the top of our priority list in Congress.

We are taking a positive step today to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina in the next few months. However, we need to think long term about the cost and efforts needed to lift up the people in the Gulf Coast. I hope to never see again the images of people too poor or too sick to evacuate their homes in times of an emergency. Nor do I wish to see a response so slow or inept that thousands lived in squalor for days. We should never forget those images and that memory should spur us to improve the TANF program to ensure that no American ever feels forgotten by the United States Government and the people it represents.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORBES). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3672, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SINCERE GRATITUDE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO FOREIGN ENTITIES THAT HAVE OFFERED ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 428) expressing the sincere gratitude of the House of Representatives to the foreign individuals, organizations, and governments that have offered material assistance and other forms of support to those who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 428

Whereas Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States with devastating effect on August 29, 2005;

Whereas the United States has a long history of humanitarian response to other countries that have experienced disasters of similar magnitude;

Whereas soon after the scope of the destruction became evident, assistance was offered by foreign individuals, organizations, and governments; and

Whereas numerous messages of condolence and support for the people of the United States have been sent to the President and Congress and to government authorities in the affected area: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives expresses its sincere gratitude to the foreign individuals, organizations, and governments that have offered material assistance and other forms of support to those who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina.

SEC. 2. The Clerk of the House of Representatives shall transmit enrolled copies of this resolution to the Secretary of State with a request that the Secretary transmit the copies to the foreign governments described in this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express the gratitude of the American people for the tremendously generous offers of support and expressions of condolences that have poured in from around the world to those who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Katrina will be remembered as one of the most catastrophic natural disasters to ever hit our shores. At this point, it would appear that thousands of victims, perhaps tens of thousands, have perished in our gulf coast region. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced without knowing where to go or how they will reestablish a permanent residence. Hundreds of thousands of jobs and businesses have been lost. Infrastructure has been destroyed. It will take years to rebuild these areas that were hit hardest by the hurricane.

However, in spite of the dark hours which we witnessed during the storm and its immediate aftermath, the spirit and will of the people most affected are beginning to shine through as a result of the support which they have received from the American people and from our friends and neighbors around the world. Nearly 100 countries have offered over \$1 billion in monetary and other forms of tangible assistance. Even Sri Lanka, horribly victimized by the recent tsunami, has generously offered assistance. Such gestures will not be forgotten.

As Americans, we have a long record of providing humanitarian aid to many countries around the world that have suffered from natural and other disasters, but we have never found ourselves in this type of situation before. The compassionate offers of assistance from our global friends are welcome, and as reflected in this resolution, we accept them with heartfelt gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to do so.

The United States is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance in this world. Whether in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch or the devastation of the Asian tsunami, the United States and our military have been in the front lines of responding to the needs of starving and destitute victims of nature's fury. It is only fitting, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that when we face devastation from a deadly hurricane that overwhelmed our own disaster plans, countries around the globe should respond to our own needs with offers of assistance.

Let me join my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in expressing our gratitude for these offers.

I am not, however, satisfied with the reception of these offers by some branches of our own government. I want to commend Secretary Rice and the Department of State for making significant and successful efforts to catalog these offers from abroad, but we learned from press reports that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was unable to process them and to determine what would be of assistance and what would not. Let me give my colleagues an example.

The Swedish Government has offered water purification equipment. No item

is more desperately needed in Louisiana than water purification equipment. They have also offered a cellular phone network which could have done much to ease the communications challenges on the gulf coast. As of yesterday, these offered items remain in Sweden.

It took a week for our government to accept the offer of four Canadian rescue vessels.

A German communications company was willing to provide an integrated satellite and cellular phone system that could handle 5,000 calls at once. The company waited for days for any response.

This area is just one more example of the failures of executive agencies tasked with disaster relief in responding to this, the greatest natural disaster ever to confront our Nation.

It is simply shameful that FEMA did not realize the scope of this disaster and failed to trigger its most significant response until the end of the day when the levees broke in New Orleans. It is simply shameful that there was not a way for FEMA to accept offers of assistance from our own military as well as citizen States across the Nation. It is simply shameful that the poor and the sick and the elderly were left without supplies and protection from the marauding gangs that seeped in and around New Orleans.

I am sure that there is plenty of blame to go around in unraveling the bureaucratic bungling that contributed to this unacceptable response, but one thing, Mr. Speaker, is clear: FEMA's leadership failed, and I call on its director to resign today.

Let us find a better way to accept offers of assistance from our friends abroad, from our fellow citizens, and from our own military.

In order to address all these shortcomings, I strongly urge the appointment of a truly independent bipartisan commission made up of public figures of distinction and integrity and experts on disaster relief to investigate the failures that have cost the lives of so many. An investigation launched by the administration or dominated by one party will never be able to get to the bottom of what went wrong. We cannot afford such a flawed investigation. We need to get this right.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 428, expressing the sincere gratitude of the House of Representatives to the foreign individuals, organizations, and governments that have offered material assistance and other forms of support to those who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina. To date, I understand that some 95 countries have come forward with offers of assistance.

Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest nations, offered \$1 million in aid.

Thailand—still mourning its 8,000 missing and dead people after the tsunami—offered 60 nurses and shipments of rice.

Israel, the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, is returning the favor by donating tents and first-aid kits.