

This woman here, who has had the roof ripped off her house and most of her possessions water damaged, FEMA's response to her is, you are on your own. Good luck.

And how about this family here. This woman is standing in water that is above her knees. The water is inside her house and has damaged her cars. Her house is not a fancy beach house. It is an average American's house. Her car is a later model and clearly more than 10 years old.

What was FEMA's response to her family's request for help? The same as it was to the people in New Orleans who were dying in the first days after Katrina struck: you are on your own.

My question to FEMA is this: Storms do not know State boundaries, so why does FEMA?

Looking at this picture here of the woman standing in her destroyed home, I am reminded of a woman that I met last week when touring hurricane damage in my own congressional district. I was touring the damage at the Park City Estates mobile home community in Davie, when I met Dorothy Rothbauer, an 86-year-old resident whose mobile home was damaged in Hurricane Katrina.

Ms. Rothbauer's home is roughly 20 miles from the beach. Her mobile home is nice. It is not extravagant. It is cozy and it has been her home for 25 years. Ms. Rothbauer is not a woman who lives beyond her means. She lives modestly and saves her money and has gotten by all of these years.

But now she needs help. She needs her government's help. As she showed me the damage to her house, she began to cry. It was excruciating. Pieces of the exterior have fallen off. Water has leaked in and the extent of structural damage is unknown.

She looked into my eyes, knowing that FEMA had told her that they could not offer her assistance, and crying, asked me what she was supposed to do now.

As I visited the other homes in the neighborhood, I realized that Dorothy's house did not have even as extensive damage as the others.

Across the street and down the block, roofs were entirely ripped off of these houses.

Dorothy's neighborhood is just one of many communities affected by Hurricane Katrina throughout Broward and Miami-Dade counties. And FEMA's answer to why they are not offering individual assistance to us in Florida is that for this storm FEMA has decided there is a State threshold of 800 homes that need to be damaged in Florida.

My State of Florida has been hit by six hurricanes, six in the past 2 years. Denying the people of Florida Federal assistance to rebuild their homes is wrong, and I urge my colleagues in the House to join the 25 Members from Florida in ensuring that FEMA will reimburse them for their damage.

The Census Bureau reports that in 2004, the percentage of people living in the Miami/

FL area in poverty was 17 percent. The Federal poverty level is, just \$12,334 for a family of two and only \$19,307 for a family of four. Denying the people of this area Federal aid in rebuilding their lives is unconscionable.

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that today I am proud to introduce legislation that is co-sponsored by every member of Florida's House of Representatives delegation. All twenty-five Republicans and Democrats.

My legislation would direct FEMA to cover valid claims for individual assistance resulting from Hurricane Katrina's impact on the State of Florida.

This legislation does not ask for something unusual, it only asks to right the wrong done to the people of Florida and it allows us as a Nation to answer the tear-filled question of what am I supposed to do now, posed to me by Dorothy Rothbauer last week.

I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor my legislation that would extend relief to the Florida victims of Hurricane Katrina.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

IDEAS FOR A BETTER AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, I will spend some time this afternoon talking about how we can keep and create jobs in America. For almost two centuries the American economy has been the envy of the world. With its dynamic, hardworking, motivated workforce America has truly been the land of opportunity where innovation has thrived. But that status is changing.

We are now running a \$670 billion annual deficit that is contributing to our

Federal budget deficit, and it has slowed our economy over the past few years. This development is not a temporary blip on the radar screen. It is the culmination of a generation of increased regulations, unsound tax policies, languishing emphasis on math and science, education, unchecked health care costs, rampant lawsuit abuse, unfocused research and development funds, and a weak trade policy enforcement system.

In short, our government has made it difficult and less desirable to keep businesses in America. Over the past generation we have put up roadblocks to keeping and creating jobs in America. If these current trends continue, our economy will continue to lag and will no longer remain the most dynamic economy in the world.

Meanwhile, countries like China and other nations are preparing for the future. They are educating their students in math, science and technology and pumping out record numbers of engineers. They are reducing tax rates and other economic barriers to entice investments into their nations. These countries are pursuing aggressive trade policies to reduce America's economic dominance in world trade.

Some of the examples are Ireland. Ireland has shifted from a Third World nation of Western Europe to the envy of the European Union largely due to its tax policies. The Celtic tiger has lowered its corporate tax rate to 12½ percent, stimulating the economy and creating jobs.

India was languishing under a burden of a socialist government; but now through their concerted effort to reduce regulations, they have stimulated their economy.

China currently graduates more English-speaking electrical engineers than America does. Their focus on education, especially math and science and technology, is allowing China to build their own Silicon Valley and attract the world's technological business to their doors.

Brazil has achieved what some believe to be a pipe dream. They are projected to be completely energy self-sufficient in a couple of years. It took them years to develop renewable energy sources, but now they are the leaders in ethanol production, and their economy is not suffering from the current high crude oil prices.

Chile is becoming an economic leader in Latin America by breaking down the barriers and doing business in their nation. Their emphasis on signing free trade agreements has been very fruitful. Last year they signed free trade agreements with the United States and with South Korea. They are currently in negotiations with China, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Japan and Australia; and they will continue to thrive.

For these reasons, these nations and other world economies are poised to move ahead of the United States in the next decade. In fact, the 2005 Index of Economic Freedom by the Heritage

Foundation ranks the United States 13th in the world. For the first time in 3 years we are not in the top 10 in the world in this measurement. This is due both to other nations' progress and economic competitiveness, as well as our own barriers to a thriving economy. Without attention to these matters, the United States is headed towards a third-rate economy, and 20 years from now we may no longer be the world's leader.

Congress needs to take these matters seriously. Last year the House began the competitiveness legislative agenda on the floor. Over a period of 8 weeks we discussed and voted on issues related to keeping and creating jobs in America.

Later this month, the Jobs Action Team is again bringing legislation to the House floor to combat this problem. But we need to take a long-term vision approach. For this reason, the House Economic Competitiveness Caucus has been created. The House Economic Competitiveness Caucus will be launched with offering opportunities to get Members involved in creating and keeping jobs in America by removing the barriers that Congress has created.

The House Economic Competitiveness Caucus will focus on ways to uncover and help the economic competitiveness in the global market as well. The caucus will provide and deepen the understanding and underlying problems that inhibit economic growth and will focus on long-term risks with current policies that make American businesses uncompetitive.

Our idea is to create and keep jobs in America. Of these jobs, the idea to keep jobs and create jobs, we have designated the problems into eight categories. These eight categories are going to be addressed, and I will go through them to tell you about what we need to do in each one; but these are the areas that Congress has created barriers to keeping and creating jobs, and we are going to help remove some of those barriers.

Health care security is the first issue. Costs related to health care are growing at a rate faster than inflation. The people who keep and create jobs here in America tell me that health care costs is their greatest challenge today. The CEO of Starbucks Coffee announced that his company spends more on health care than they do on coffee itself. Their raw materials are less than their health care costs. It is a huge problem that drives up the price of American products, and that forces jobs overseas. It is a complex problem whose policies are set through government policy primarily because of what is demanded in Medicare, Medicaid, and in lawsuit vulnerability. And this problem must be addressed in order to lower costs and improve our ability to compete.

The second area that we need to improve here in America is bureaucratic red tape. The Federal Government has become a creeping ivy of regulations.

The total burden of the environmental economic impact at the workplace and through tax compliance, this regulatory burden mounts up and the total cost is \$850 billion per year.

□ 1745

Eight hundred fifty billion dollars a year to comply with regulation in the United States; that amount of money is greater than the gross domestic products of either Canada or Mexico. For any product manufactured in the United States, the cost to comply with regulations is 12 percent of the cost of that product. In other words, if it costs \$1 to build that product, 12 cents of that dollar goes just to comply with the paperwork.

What if we applied some common sense to our regulations and streamlined the application? What if we could reduce them by half? We would be 6 percent more competitive in the world and that would help us create jobs.

Lifelong learning is another issue where we need to remove barriers. Job training and retraining are necessary parts of keeping up in today's economic environment. Our children must learn the fundamentals of math and science and they must become familiar with technology and be exposed to a math and science curriculum in order to be able to compete in a global economy. We must help all of our colleges and universities produce graduates who enter science and engineering careers.

The nation of India graduated 85,000 software engineers last year. As I told you earlier, China graduated more English-speaking electrical engineers than the United States. We have to encourage more young women and young men to pursue technical areas of our economy.

Energy is a tremendous issue today and it is a barrier to keeping and creating jobs. We have all seen the price of gas at the pumps. It costs me over \$40 to fill up my minivan. Imagine those on fixed incomes, those who are retired or farmers and truckers or anyone else who uses transportation to create or keep their jobs? Our gas prices are too high. Even before Hurricane Katrina, gasoline was on the rise.

We have not built a new refinery in America since 1976. The limited growth in new production of crude oil has been a tremendous problem. We once again were defeated in trying to open up the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve, or ANWR. I have always been puzzled after living in Kansas, what is so precious about ANWR? Kansas has been producing oil for 100 years. We cleanly and efficiently drill and discover new sources of petroleum right in Kansas near metropolitan areas, near urban settings and in rural settings, and we do it without disturbing the environment or polluting the environment. Why can we not do that in the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve?

In the energy bill we were requesting only 1,800 acres to produce oil in an area of over 2.5 million acres. It just

amazed me; the area is only about 3 square miles, and to produce the production that is all that would need to be utilized. And it is in an area in the North Slope of Alaska, which is the size of California.

We have to be able to develop new sources of production. Natural gas is also in limited supply with futures prices in the month of December peaking \$12 per 1,000 cubic feet. What does that mean? It means higher electricity costs, but in comparison, that same unit of measure is only \$4 in Europe and less than \$1 in Russia.

Why is it so high in America? We have had environmental lawsuits and EPA regulations against developing new sources of producing electricity like clean coal production plants. We have had the inability to build a pipeline from the Canadian natural gas fields to the east coast of America. We can lower the energy costs by easing regulations and applying some common sense, by increasing the production of crude, by increasing the refinery capacity here in America, but we also need to improve conservation and increase alternative energy sources.

Today, in Kansas, we are building a windmill farm which will generate electricity and we are going to build four additional wind electricity generating farms in Kansas, and that is a good alternative source of energy. But we need to continue finding other alternative sources and new sources if we are going to be competitive in the future.

Innovation and investment is another area where we need to remove barriers. Technology is the engine of growth, yet America does not really have a comprehensive plan to encourage research and development. In Europe they have a different philosophy for research and development. Their money goes directly into product development and it is not available for other companies to expand. We have not seen it that way in America. We do not do things like they do with Airbus, for example. Airbus is subsidized by European nations, by their own nations, and that research and development goes directly into a product that competes with products in America that are not subsidized, that are built by Boeing.

But in America we take our research and development dollars, like the ones that are spent at the National Institute of Aviation Research at Wichita State University, where we develop new manufacturing techniques for composite materials, research on their ability to withstand stresses, their ability to compare composites, and that research and development is made available to small businesses to develop new ideas and put them into practice and create jobs. It is available to Boeing, Beech. It is available to Cessna and LearJet and any small business. It is even available to Airbus, even though their research dollars are not made available to us. We need to be

more focused and more protective of our research and development discoveries.

We also need to encourage international investment. Capital dollars, the dollars needed or dollars that are needed for investment, capital goes where it is welcome. With good intentions to protect investors in America, Congress has created regulations that make it difficult to attract capital into America.

Now, in South Carolina you can find a BMW plant. That is a place where we have attracted outside investment in America. We need to do more of that, but it is very difficult when we have these barriers that have been created.

Trade fairness is another area where we need to protect American exports, and it should be foremost in any trade agreement and any policy that Congress reviews and considers. The ultimate goal should be to put American businesses at the top of the global supply chain which benefits small businesses and creates jobs.

Now, trade fairness can be applied to any time we have a trade agreement. So it is important that we continue to have trade agreements like we just passed this summer called CAFTA, the Central America Free Trade Agreement. These free trade agreements give us a vehicle to allow free and fair trade. If you look at the way some policies have happened through trade, for example, China, they have manipulated their currency. They have targeted manufacturing areas like hand trucks and auto lifters.

In Wichita we have a company that makes hand trucks. Hand trucks are what moves boxes around for one individual to use. Those have been targeted by China, and they manufacture them and they sell them below the cost of manufacturing them through subsidies, trying to run American manufacturers out of business so they can have a corner on the market. We need to combat that through trade fairness.

The one thing that we have an oversupply of in America that we need to export is lawsuits. And the way we can export lawsuits is through our trade agreements, by taking these countries to task when they unfairly target our businesses.

Another thing we need to do is tax relief and simplification. Our tax structure puts American businesses at a tremendous disadvantage in the world market. We must simplify and eliminate the punitive nature of our current Tax Code. Incentives such as bonus depreciation will encourage investment which moves production lines and increases revenues. But we need to look beyond that. We need to have broader changes as well.

There is a movement now in America to take our tax policy and put it into something like a value added tax or a national sales tax or a flat tax. These ideas can help us become more competitive. But the real objective ought to be to remove the cost of taxes from

the bottom line. Right now through our income tax system, the way it is structured today, the costs end up on the bottom line. The cost of all the labor, the cost that gets buried into the products that are passed from one supplier to a manufacturer to a retailer or a wholesaler, gets buried into our products and it makes us less competitive in the world market. So we need to find a way to remove our taxes from the bottom line and still accumulate the amount of money that we need to run the Federal Government.

The last item I want to talk about in the steps to competitiveness is ending lawsuit abuse. We can return integrity to our legal system by curtailing frivolous lawsuits and returning the courts' attention to upholding the laws of our land rather than legislating from the bench. We have seen lawsuit abuse. We have seen activist judges create a situation where America has difficulty in our costs.

One of the things we are going through now is an asbestos settlement. The asbestos settlement is going to create a trust fund, and we must be very, very sure that only those that have been actually impacted by asbestos receive money from the trust fund and that it does not become a cash or a slush fund for anybody who gets to slide into the fund. But it is going to be huge. It is going to be \$180 billion. That money comes out of the profit lines, and it means it is going to drive up the cost of products in America.

We have lawsuits where 40 percent of the money does not go to the victims. Sometimes it is 50 percent of the money that does not go to the victims. We have lawsuits where too many people get involved in the lawsuit and the cost of going through our system becomes extremely high. That ends up buried in the cost of our products and makes us less competitive. The other side of the equation is the activist judges that have been involved in our court system in the debate.

In Kansas, for example, one of our judges decided that the State was not spending enough money on education. Well, that is a good debate to have and those decisions should be made by our legislature. We have this concept in America of separation of powers. We have an executive branch, a legislative branch, and we have a judicial branch. There is a balance in those powers. But what we have been seeing in America is a crossing of lines, a blurring of lines where the courts have encroached on the activities of the legislature.

In Kansas they were deciding how much money we were going to be spending, where it is going to be spent on educational issues. And that is a travesty and it is costly, and it ends up complicating things in America. I think that that is difficult when it comes to doing business in America because we cannot plan for that.

We have a legislative system that has a job that they need to do and it should not be encroached upon by the court system.

Those eight issues are issues we are working on through the Economic Competitive Caucus: Health care security, bureaucratic red tape termination, lifelong learning, energy self-sufficiency and security, innovation and investment, trade fairness, tax relief and simplification, and ending lawsuit abuse and litigation management.

If we can get these legislative initiatives through, we will lower the cost of doing business in America. That will help us create new jobs. We will be able to keep the jobs that we have, and in doing that, we will be the dynamic economic force in the future that we are today.

We have a wonderful opportunity that came through a horrible tragedy, and I want to talk about what things could be done in rebuilding in the gulf area in the south following the damage that was caused by Katrina.

Katrina was a horrible incident with the loss of life, the loss of property. The South is never going to be the same. If you look at the area we are told that 100,000 square miles were affected by Hurricane Katrina. Now that is larger than the State of Kansas. It is hard to get our minds around the area and the amount of damage that has been caused in the South by Katrina.

When you look at the property damage, the houses that are blown away, you cannot really picture the heartache that is created by the loss of a loved one or even the loss of pictures, items that you have from people who preceded you in life, and photos and journals and just things that are taken from us when we have a tragedy like that. Whether it is a flood or high wind, it is gone and you will never be able to replace those items.

I know when we had water damage in my own home and lost items that were precious to me, I could not put a price tag on it. My wife lost the Bible that she had that she wrote comforting notes in on the day she lost her father. Those kinds of things cannot be replaced. But what we can do in the South is, we can rebuild that area. We can give the people who live there hope. We can create an economic engine down there that can be greater with new jobs and new ideas and new possibilities.

Now we can do that, set up an experiment down there in how we can streamline the process of regulation, provide more energy, rebuild the area in a safe fashion, and do it so we can get that area back on track and get those people back on their feet and allow them to start their lives over.

In the area of regulations, we have such regulations like the Jones Act that has been temporarily waived to allow for a clean up of the region.

□ 1800

Today, the President waived the Davis-Bacon Act to allow for lower costs in reconstruction. That will allow us to get more people involved in reconstruction, but I would like us to

look at the banking regulations. That will help us reopen banks and access to accounts and mortgage processing.

We should expedite the EPA's siting and permitting process and the licensing process, especially when it comes in the area of small refineries. We should reduce the environmental impact statement requirements and streamline that process. That can hold up construction for months, if not years; and I believe that OSHA and other agencies that have a tendency and a propensity to be working in an adversarial mode or an adversarial relationship with employers should be encouraged on the site to work with employers through a process, and a good example of how that can work occurred in Wichita, Kansas.

A couple of years ago, OSHA decided to target three counties in Kansas. One of them was Cedric County where Wichita is located, and they targeted homebuilders. They went there and they showed up on job sites, and they started writing fines and assessing costs against employers for alleged violations of safety. They just struck a lot of fear in the whole home construction industry, and the result of that was that many areas just shut down.

If you think about it, a subcontractor, let us say a framing contractor, on a job site, if he has a job that it is a \$100,000 house, the framing portion of it, his profit may be only a couple of thousand dollars. Well, if his fine is \$5,000, it is cheaper for him, more economical for him, to stay at home and not do the job than to be at the job and have the potential of some kind of fine he did not even know about. Some of the alleged violations that were sited were a Styrofoam cup on the stairs, a cord that ran across the job site that was in the wrong location, a ladder improperly leaning against a wall. Anyway, the bottom line was that they shut down the homebuilding industry.

If we were going to get it started, we had to get OSHA together with the builders. So I was contacted by the Wichita Area Builders Association. I got in touch with OSHA. We got the two parties together, and they came up with a plan where they could work together, and it worked very simply. OSHA would show up and announced would walk around with the job superintendent or the contractor. They would make a list of any potential violations. They would discuss that list. OSHA gave it to the contractor, and then he said, I will be back in 6 weeks; I will tell you when I am coming and let us go through this list and see how you are doing.

We found out most of the problems that were created were caused because of a language barrier. Many of the workers were Hispanic, did not have good English skills, and they did not understand how you properly lean a

ladder up against a wall. They did not understand you were not supposed to put your Styrofoam cup on the stairs, that it could be a trip hazard. Once that was effectively communicated, the environment became safe. It worked very well. The homebuilders went back to work. OSHA was satisfied because they created a safe work environment, and together they achieved a common goal of a safe working environment and getting the job done.

We could use that example down in Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama as we rebuild down there where we have EPA, where we have OSHA, where we have other government agencies working with the private sector to get people back in their homes, to get them working and to get them back on their feet.

In energy, in order to immediately help the refinery capacity in the gulf region, as well as around the country, Congress needs to ease the roadblocks increasing the capacity to current refineries. Rather than the 3 to 5 years that it takes today to build a new refinery, current refineries could be increased in capacity in as short as 12 months, maybe as long as 18 months. In the long term, the government needs to be able to drill in ANWR, as I said earlier, and other locations to increase the supply of crude; but we need to start by streamlining the EPA process on permitting and reduce the time period involved.

We need to ease some EPA regulations, especially when it comes to some of the emissions and the Clean Air Act, and we need to take advantage of the natural growth and increasing capacity by expanding current sites as far as refineries are concerned.

But these are important to rebuild the refineries down there and increase the supply of gasoline, and that will have a general impact. Right now, we are all paying higher gas prices. By increasing the supply of gas, we will have lower gas prices. It is simple economics. We need to carry it out in the South, but look at other areas where we can streamline, getting a greater supply of fuel.

The infrastructure. In order to rebuild the area of highway, roads, bridges, train tracks and the ports, they all have to be restarted. The Department of Transportation and related agencies need to allow for the expedited planning and building, as well as expedited process for granting permits and waivers and licenses. The insurance community has to be involved.

There are many lessons to learn from Hurricane Katrina with relation to the flood insurance coverage and implementation and access to mandates for insurance in vulnerable areas and concerns about the definition of flood insurance versus the protection against high winds and a myriad of other provisions, but the government needs to

make sure that the insurance claims are processed quickly for rebuilding.

There also needs to be an incentive in place for those to rebuild in high-risk areas and to purchase the proper insurance. Our government should consider a buyout of particular areas, especially those that are vulnerable for other flooding or vulnerable in polluted areas. If companies and people will not sell, then they are going to have be required to purchase insurance.

Liability can be a roadblock for the reconstruction. Lawsuit abuse needs to be prevented. We should probably look at a loser-pay or a blanket liability protection which needs to be instituted in the region. Otherwise, the economy could be completely strangled by junk lawsuits or liabilities that could plague the region for decades to come.

In health care, we have hundreds of thousands of displaced residents that need to be able to use their health care insurance wherever they are, even if they are temporarily relocated. The government needs to allow for health care portability. When we are in these regions to rebuild, we need to use programs like the associated health care plans and other ways for employers to afford and offer health care insurance, and it all should be implemented quickly.

The policies to allow for the purchase of insurance across State lines should be explored in order to encourage the growth of health care facilities and incentives for health care workers, and education training programs should be implemented.

Education portability is important. With dislocated families spread across the whole region and the Nation, education vouchers are needed to help pay for the cost of education for these kids who are temporarily in other areas and are able to go to school. School loan waivers, Pell grant extensions, and other higher education policies are needed to be implemented to allow students to continue their education during this time.

Job skills training, I think, is very important. Some of these jobs are not going to be re-created. We are going to have new industries down in that area. The government should work with the chambers of commerce and companies to set up public/private partnerships to train people for jobs that will be available in those areas and for jobs during the rebidding process.

I think there are a lot of skills that could be utilized and developed during that time, and tax incentives are probably a good thing that we need to discuss when it comes to rebuilding as well. Immediate tax incentives to encourage investment in the area should

be implemented, including a deduction tax for companies and individuals who build in the affected region, and accelerated depreciation should be available for capital and equipment and software investments as well.

These ideas can be used to quickly help reconstruct the area in New Orleans and in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. It is a way that we can get people back on their feet again.

In summary, I just want to go over the things that I think we need to do in Congress to not only help the South get back on its feet again but also to help America stay number one into the future, that is, that we need to address the issues in health care. We need to limit the growth in regulations of bureaucratic red tape. We need to effectively focus our education system on the future economy.

We need to develop new energy sources and increase the supply of energy, as well as the conservation of the energy and alternate energy sources. We need to look at research and development through innovation and investment. We have fair trade policies. We have to improve our tax system so that we can have some tax relief and simplification, and we need to end lawsuit abuse and have litigation management for America.

With these individual ideas, I think we will be able to grow a stronger America and retain our number one status well into the future so that our children and grandchildren will have the same opportunities that we have had to build a strong country and make our dreams come true.

THE TREMENDOUS CHALLENGES THAT FACE OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss McMORRIS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Madam Speaker, I have got a lot of papers and a lot of posters. One hour will in no way accommodate all that needs to be said tonight about the tremendous challenges that face our country today, including how we conduct ourselves in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

While my remarks tonight in no way should be construed as encompassing all of my thoughts on the very important issues that I discuss tonight, just mark this down as a start.

First, let me say that I am especially proud of the way that the people of my district and of this country have wrapped their arms around the victims of Hurricane Katrina. At this time, we have a healthy contingent of expert Georgians in the traumatized gulf States, and we have received thousands of Katrina's victims into our cities, churches, and homes.

I have come to this floor on many occasions. People around the world have commented on how shocked they are to

see such poverty in America. While cities and localities pass anti-panhandling measures that criminalize begging tourists and visitors in downtown areas asking for help, Hurricane Katrina washed away America's veneer of populist opportunity, a country that has overcome its racist, slave-holding past, a country ready for world dominion because it has learned how to uplift the human spirit at home.

Katrina, in images as stark and undeniable as could be, has laid bare the Republican lie that its policies promote growth and prosperity for all Americans and leave no child behind, while Katrina put into our living rooms and the world's living rooms the cruel hoax that has been played on America and those who love America by the ruthless sybaritic power player elites who are as responsible for the conditions endured by too many Americans as they are for the embarrassing and breathtaking incompetencies we all witnessed just before Labor Day.

Almost 30,000 New Orleans households live on less than \$10,000 per year. More babies and young kids are going hungry in our country. Eleven percent of our families experienced hunger in 2003. One million more Americans are living in poverty today than there were 1 year ago. Income distribution has become obscenely skewed toward the rich during the Bush years. In Manhattan, the poor make two cents for each dollar that the rich make. This places Manhattan on par with Namibia for income disparity.

Interestingly, in the financial capital of the world, New York City, the Bronx is the poorest urban county in the country, and New York State is being depleted of its middle class.

America is being depleted of its middle class. Over 50 percent of America's income goes to the top 20 percent of households. With even more tax cuts for the wealthy on the horizon, coupled with real budget cuts for the programs that are forced to take care of more and more Americans, the situation can only be expected to get worse, sadly.

Incomes for 95 percent of American households are flat or falling. Only the top 5 percent are experiencing the growth that we hear the Republicans talk about.

Now, I have got tons of documentation to offer for all of the statistics that we cite, but let me take a moment and reiterate where we are for all the people who are listening tonight.

□ 1815

Let me recall for just a moment the America they might not know but that more of us are coming all too well to know.

I will start with this poster, which depicts a black man hanging from a tree. The caption says "The body of Robert McNair is seen here as residents and schoolchildren in the Georgetown community saw it between about 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. last Thursday." This was on the front page of the Jackson,

Mississippi, Advocate the week of October 23 to 29 when I was in Mississippi for a speaking engagement. This was what I saw.

Sadly, it is what the children in the neighborhood saw, a black man hanging from a tree. A lynching. That is 2003. I am not talking about 1903. This is 2003. Sadly, in 2005, we have two lynchings being investigated in the State of Georgia, my home State, and both of them are supposed to have been suicides. In this story it was reported that this poor Mr. Robert McNair committed suicide, hanging from a tree.

When I come to the floor and do these monthly talks, some way or other we get around to the state of black America because it is important for us to understand that there are many Americans, and some of those Americans we do not see and we do not know. But we need to know how all Americans live so that we can make sure that no American is left behind.

On some indices, even today, it is true that the racial disparities are worse today than they were at the time of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. People would say it is not true, but, alas, it is true. And, of course, the statistics document that sad truth. United for a Fair Economy gives us these statistics in its State of the Dream report on imprisonment. To close the racial gap, it will take 190 years just so that black people are imprisoned for the same crime at the same rate as white people are imprisoned.

What about poverty? We saw a lot of that. Overall poverty, the racial disparity, 150 years to close the gap. Why does that have to be? At the slow rate that the black-white poverty gap has been narrowing since 1968, it would take 150 years to close the gap.

What about child poverty? Two hundred ten years to close the gap. Almost one-third of black children live in poverty. The child poverty gap would take 210 years to disappear, not reaching parity until 2212.

I would like to thank the National Council for La Raza that provided us with these statistics, the proportion of children without health insurance in the United States, home ownership rates. Look and you can see the proportion of children without health insurance in the United States. Look at the Hispanic figures. Look at that. Twenty-five percent of young Latino children do not have health insurance in this country.

What about home ownership rates, because we hear a lot of talk about the growth economy, and the Republicans and the President talk about promoting home ownership, home ownership, the first tier toward building wealth, okay? Well, if you are lucky enough to be able to own a home, sadly black and Hispanic home ownership rates are low. How low? To close the home ownership gap, the disparity between white home ownership and black home ownership, the first tier toward