

need to get them food stamp access. We need to make sure that they have access to education and housing and not just far-flung housing all over the country. If you lived in New Orleans, you do not need to resettle yourself permanently in Utah. That is not what we want to have a policy direct these people to. We want to bring them back. We want to set up transitional and then temporary housing and then eventually get them into permanent facilities, whether it is facilities that they have assistance from the Federal Government or whether they be given the ability to help them to make their own purchases of homes, which would be a wonderful thing to see.

That is what the leadership in this Congress is going to need to make happen. It is certainly going to be suggested by our side of the aisle. We need to make sure that we come together and suggest it on both sides of the aisle. The reconciliation process should be suspended. There are a number of things that should happen, and we are going to continue to talk about that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, we usually would have a closing statement here, but our time has run out. We will have, I understand, the first Democratic hour on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, with that, we would like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30 Something Working Group to come to the floor, and it was an honor to address the House once again.

RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized to have the opportunity to address the Speaker before this House.

This Nation has undergone the most serious natural disaster, the most costly natural disaster. Possibly not in the measure of lives but in the measure of treasure, it certainly has, and we pray for the recovery of those victims that are yet to be found. We pray that that number can stay as low as possible, and we know that, regardless of the number, each loss of life hurts and pains each family deeply.

This Congress has addressed Hurricane Katrina, done so quickly. We had a unanimous consent agreement after a conference call on Friday after the storm struck in its fury and the wind began to die down on Monday, the previous Monday. We appropriated \$10.5 billion, Mr. Speaker, and we did so under a unanimous consent agreement. We did that because we knew that we needed to get resources into the hands of the people who were saving lives, lifting people off of rooftops and pulling people out of houses and bringing

boats down through the communities, and we needed to make sure that the resources were there.

We needed to make sure that there was food, there was water, there was shelter, and this Nation watched on television as the disasters that were there brought people together in the Superdome, in the convention center, other locations around New Orleans, other locations around Alabama, Mississippi and, of course, other places in Louisiana.

This Nation has watched transfixed as we reacted and we deployed resources into the region and began to recover from this disaster. Each of us have different opinions about what was done right and what was done wrong, but Mr. Speaker, my position is that we are not done saving people. We are not done helping people get relocated. We are not done helping their lives get put back together, and they are not finished building for their future. Once that path is determined and once they start down that path and once we can see that we put a plan together that is going to help people get relocated, and at least in the short- and mid-term future, we will have seen to the needs of the many, many needy, then that will be time enough and plenty time enough for us to meet together in this Congress and to put together a chronological order of what happened, who knew what, why did they know it, what they did not know and why, what communications did they have, what decisions were made that impacted on the rescue operations and the recovery operations. What did they know and when did they know it, Mr. Speaker, is one way to ask that question and what did we learn from this disaster.

Time will come and that will be soon enough, and perhaps in this hour I will go back and talk about how I think we should put together the system here in Congress to take a good look at this, but, right now, we are recovering from this disaster.

Congress appropriated \$10.5 billion that Friday following the storm, and it was emergency spending. It was a special session, emergency spending money, \$10.5 billion. Our report was that FEMA was spending \$500 million a day. By the end of that day, the report was \$750 million a day. So that was a calculus to get us through Labor Day weekend, appropriate \$10.5 billion.

I asked for an accounting of that spending. It did not come early in the week. It did come later in the week, and the accounting came with the request for another \$51.8 billion, and the calculus for the \$51.8 billion was not readily available to us. The answer was simply we know we are going to spend more than another \$50 billion, so let us appropriate it.

So this Congress laid out a blank check, and in that appropriation there was a single line item. First, there was \$1.8 billion in there for the Department of Defense, and they spent a lot of money down there and poured a lot of

resources in. That is fine, but I believe the largest single line item ever passed in this Congress and appropriated without strings attached, without guidelines, without congressional direction was the \$50 billion that went to FEMA.

I asked for an accounting of that money. I wanted to know, first, how was FEMA spending, and now the number went from \$500 million a day to \$750 million a day to \$2 billion a day, and where was that money going. I happen to think in those terms of unit prices, how many meals, how much water, how much ice, how much fuel, how many rental units, how many people are on payroll, how many contractors are coming in that are contractors that are being paid, how do these contracts all add up, how does it divide out, how does it average out.

I thought it would be something that would be a calculation that one could track, and when I did get a look at those numbers, it had \$3.3 billion there for 200,000 trailer houses, 30,000 of which were available and 170,000 of which were back-ordered. So it is hard to define that \$3.3 billion as emergency spending when you spend the money to purchase a contract for future construction of trailer houses not available, and I say that is not emergency spending.

In addition, in the \$50 billion that came for the second appropriation there was another 100,000 trailer houses in there for the tune of \$1.6 billion. So now FEMA has had the authority apparently to purchase 300,000 trailer houses for the cost of \$4.9 billion, \$400 million of it will go for the 30,000 trailers, and that is rough numbers. Those trailers are available, but 270,000 trailers are back-ordered for a cost of about \$4.5 billion, declared and deemed to be emergency spending, the kind of thing that is going to help save lives, recover people, and, in fact, it took resources away that could have been better used in the recovery process.

In addition, in that appropriation there was \$650 million that was declared to be emergency spending, dedicated to mitigation of future disasters. Mitigation of future disasters cannot be characterized as emergency spending and cannot be characterized as something that helps disaster victims today in the gulf coast. It is money that could have gone to help people, but it is pigeon-holed. It is earmarked, and it is committed to other projects. We do not know what they are. Congress was not apprised of that, and yet we have an oversight responsibility.

All appropriations must start in this House of Representatives, Mr. Speaker, and those appropriations then flow through here over to the Senate and from the Senate then probably back, not often back to conference but to the President.

We start the appropriations process. The Founders were very clear in our responsibility and our duty here. You cannot spend money without the House of Representatives initiating this, and

the House of Representatives approved one single line item, \$50 billion.

I simply asked that we cut that down and appropriate \$10 billion for the second week. It got us through the first week of intensity. The second week should have done the same. In fact, it would have nearly met the \$2 billion a day that FEMA said they were spending, but we could not bring that up in those increments because the Senate was busy with their confirmation of Justice Roberts and did not want to be bothered to walk out of the Senate judiciary chambers to vote yea or nay on a \$10 billion package that could have passed the Senate under a unanimous consent because, in fact, not a single Senator stood up against the \$50 billion anyway.

□ 2200

So that did not hold very much sway with me from a rational perspective, Mr. Speaker, and so I voted “no” on this appropriations process. Because although I want to help people, we have an obligation for oversight and there was none; and, furthermore, we have an obligation to devise a plan, and there is none. Now, it does not mean there is not a plan to reach out and help people and that the system is not working. It is, Mr. Speaker. So I do not want the wrong implications to get in there.

But maybe you have heard the story about how the fellow went in to drain the swamp and he found himself up to his ears in alligators and it took his mind off of draining the swamp. That is kind of what happened down there in New Orleans. Everybody is so busy fighting off the alligators that the overall plan that needs to come into play to take care of the billions of dollars that likely will be coming from the taxpayers of this country has not been put in place, it has not been articulated, or it has not even been speculated to this Congress in any large way. And it is our job.

If there is no plan that comes to us that we can support, it is our job to devise a plan that we can support. In fact, it is our job to consider many, many alternatives and put our best foot forward, our best brains forward and husband the resources. We need to do the wise thing, the right thing, and position New Orleans, the gulf coast, for the long term, the best long term for this entire country, Mr. Speaker.

So after that vote, as I asked questions and tried to get answers, I think really it was just there were not answers out there. Everybody was busy working to save people, and they should have been; but there was not an eye on what are we going to do with 300,000 trailer houses when or if they ever get built and where will they go. Will they go 100 miles north of New Orleans, up someplace maybe north of Baton Rouge where it gets a little higher ground? Will they go in there and trench in water lines and lay in sewer lines and build a sewer plant and bring in electricity and put in elec-

trical lines and put in streets and driveways and set these trailer houses in there row after row after row?

Imagine how big a trailer court it would be if it had 10,000 trailers in it. Now think of 100,000. And even though they probably will not all go in the same place, think in terms of 100,000 trailers all rowed up. Now think in terms of another hurricane, a wind-storm. What happens? Do people want to live in those trailers in perpetuity? And I will say, no, not very many.

And what is the life expectancy of a trailer when we put \$4.9 billion into 300,000 trailers, and many months from now the last trailer is built? Maybe even more than a year from now the last trailer is built and wheeled into site. Where are the people going to be that will come to move into those? The displaced people will have found a place by then.

So I contend, Mr. Speaker, that that is not a solution. It is not a wise solution. It is a distraction from the solution. It has happened without deliberation and without debate. It was an administrative decision, and I have not found the individual that will stand up and say, yes, that was my idea, I liked it, and we are going to stick with it. No, there is not an answer on that, Mr. Speaker, because the public knows at least intuitively that that is not a long-term solution. In fact, it is not a short-term solution. The trailers are back ordered, Mr. Speaker.

So as I watched this unfold and had my difficulty in getting answers, I began working the phones last Thursday. I had two staff people that worked diligently into the night on Thursday and started again on Friday and worked until 11:30 at night on Friday night trying to come up with contact numbers so I could make a phone call and talk to a few of the people that were in the region down in the gulf coast that could give me some of the answers and what the real plans were, if there are any; what kind of definitive answers and responses could we get.

We were not able to make contact in any meaningful way; and so along about Saturday, in fact about half time at the Iowa State-Iowa game, I made a decision to jump on a plane in Ames. I left at the end of the third quarter. It was hard to do, but Iowa State was ahead 23 to 3 at the time, so I went down to the airport, jumped aboard a little Bonanza airplane, a little single-engine, and we flew our way towards New Orleans.

We stopped in Little Rock that night and stayed out of the area. There was not a room to be had anywhere in that close region from Baton Rouge on south. In fact, even north of Baton Rouge. So we stayed in Little Rock, and then went back in the air at 5:15 in the morning and flew on into New Orleans and landed there about 7:26 a.m. Sunday morning. There was no commercial traffic going in or out of the airport. There were military air flights that were going in and helicopters

moving around, but not the real intensity that you might expect to see, and I found out why.

We pulled up there to the flight service, and they looked out and came out to greet us. Real fine folks there. They were very friendly and kind of wondered what we were doing there; and we said, well, we came down here to take a look and see what is going on. They said, well, we do not see too many people coming in here like that. So we walked into their office and they said, well, did you have something to eat? Here is some ice water, here is a little pop. We have a little food here. Here are some MREs, some meals ready to eat.

Those MREs seem to be everywhere in that city. Every time you turn around, there is another boxful of meals ready to eat. That tells you they have been getting resources out for quite some time. Everywhere you go there is cans of water and bottles of water, and sometimes iced-down pop and food sitting around. It is not always the finest cuisine, but it is nutrition just the same.

So we had our conversation there and picked up the phone and called across to the military headquarters where the central command is that is planning and taking care and managing the disaster relief that is going on, and I told them I had just flown in in the morning and wanted to come over and talk to their commanding officer and get a sense of what was going on there. So they sent a car over right away to pick me up and brought me over to headquarters, and we had a good chat there for a while and a briefing on the maps on where the water was.

In fact, I happened to recall that on the back side of this picture there is a map, Mr. Speaker. This is the map of New Orleans; and as it sits here, it is color coded according to the depth of the water. This is Lake Pontchartrain here, and there is some high ground up along the edge of the Lake. But once it gets over the levee, it goes too deep, and the brown is 9 to 16 feet of water. Now, this is after the flood. And then it goes to orange, and you can see the brown; the deepest areas would be right in here and here.

This is the 17th Street Canal, I believe, right in there. And then there are two other canals that caused a problem. I believe this one had about three breaches in it about there. This one up here and this way started flowing water down into New Orleans.

But the depth of this water, the dark brown, up to 16 feet deep, 9 to 16; and the orange, you can see in some of these areas here and here, 6 to 9 feet deep; and then in the green areas, the water was 4 to 6 feet deep; and then the blue gets a little more shallow, 2 to 4 feet deep; and the turquoise, or the lavender, about 0 to 2 feet deep. There were some deeper areas in here this far, as you can see; but this huge area out here was all water inside this shipping canal, here and inside the Mississippi

River dikes and all around this way. So this is the bowl. This is the bottom of the bowl, Mr. Speaker; and this is the area where the people suffered the most.

Listening to the briefing there, I want to say a few good words about the people that are on the front lines that have been working relentlessly for, I have lost track of the days now, 14, 15, 16 days. Maybe it is 16 or more days. Some of those people have worked 20 hours a day, some longer than that. Some did not leave duty and just nodded off a little in between from one crisis to another.

As I began to walk around up there in their operations center and talking to different officers and talking to different people that were there, I began to find out a lot about what they had been doing. The 82nd Airborne is the military unit that is taking care of the communications there. In fact, simply because of the service that they have provided and the communications system they set up, they finally linked together the rest of the agencies, the nongovernmental organizations and the Federal agencies that are there, linked them together in a communications system. And now, I believe that they meet every day at least once a day for a joint meeting where they all sit in the room. And they are all in that room, by the way, talking to people next to them and exchanging information. Instead of sending a message back to Washington, DC, and waiting for an answer in an e-mail or on a cell phone, they are right there with the people looking them in the eye. If they need a meeting, they can have that meeting on the spot.

And I will tell you from my trips over into other parts of the world, particularly three trips into Iraq, that if there is any organization in the world that has an ability to bring order out of chaos, it is our United States military. And when we look at a natural disaster of this magnitude, this unprecedented magnitude, we see that it was difficult to get resources in there. It was difficult to coordinate those resources. From this same microphone, I believe it was the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, gave a good explanation of what happened in this hurricane/flood that was Katrina, and it was this:

If you were going to do a military assault on a city, the first thing you would do would be to go in and cut off the power and the communications, which Hurricane Katrina did. The wind took out the power lines. The wind took out some of the cell phone towers. It took out the ability to make telephone calls. It took out the ability to turn on the lights and run anything. It shut down the communications. This city was shut down. No lights, no power, no telephones. Well, sporadic cell phone service that finally just sputtered and died out. That went on.

That is the first operation you would do, would be to wipe out the commu-

nications and the power. The second thing you would do would be to cut off all the transportation routes to the city, which this flood did. Sometimes it just took out the access, or flooded the access to the bridges; and sometimes it took out, I believe it was Highway 10, where it blew parts of that out and dropped it right down into the water. But it shut down the transportation routes in and out of New Orleans.

That is the second thing you would do in a military operation. First, shut off power, communications, and then cut off transportation, or access to the city. And then the third thing you would do after you immobilized the city would be to attack, and that is what the flood did. This flood poured over the dike through the 17th Street Canal, through this other canal, and then filled this deep bowl up here with up to 16 feet of water in these areas and drifting on out to this perimeter along this way.

While that was going on, we had people that knew that there was a problem brewing. They knew the bowl was starting to fill, but they could not get over here to see how much water was coming in because there just was no transportation access to do that. So they could only speculate. And if you cannot see the water pouring in, you cannot tell how much water is coming in. You can have some degree of knowledge as to how fast it is; but when the power is out and it is at night, you cannot really tell what is going on.

On top of that, as I had my conversations with the people over there, I found out that on Monday afternoon, by 3:30, there were looters out then, in force, in gangs, with guns, already stealing, already looting, and taking shots that were keeping our rescue people from going in.

Now, when you think about going in in a boat in a swamp in an urban environment, we do not have any military trained to do that. We have never envisioned that kind of warfare, with a flooded city where you go in with a John boat and float on in there and try to rescue people while under fire. That is not part of what we have experience with or anything we have ever imagined. So the gangs intimidated, the shots were fired, and they kept the rescue operations and some of the recovery operations and some of the analysis operations from going in and seeing what was going on and being able to identify this problem.

Meanwhile, New Orleans is filling with water, and it filled beyond any level it had ever been at before. Now you had the perfect storm. And I could talk about the weather forces that brought that out, and I think what I would do is just to give the quickest of answers. Most people, I think, Mr. Speaker, have watched this on television, and it was almost a perfect storm from the standpoint of where the eye of the hurricane was, how the wind drove and the counterclockwise spinning of the hurricane, where it sat over

here to the east, or to the right of New Orleans, slightly to the right of New Orleans.

That wind that came from the south and up in here in the outlet of Lake Ponchartrain off of the open gulf here drove water up into Lake Pontchartrain, a lake that is maybe 8 to 15 feet deep; but it is a huge lake. And it pushed so much water up into this lake that there was half again more water than there was before the storm. Eight to 10 feet more water in this lake driven by the low pressure center, which actually lifts water up that is in the center of a hurricane.

And then driven by 150 or more velocity winds, pushed that water in and shoved an extra 10 feet up into Lake Pontchartrain, and then stacking that water over here on the north side.

And when the hurricane moved further to the east, this counterclockwise motion turned that wind around from the south, southeast, where it was driving the water into Lake Pontchartrain, and brought it over to the top; and it was coming now down from the north. And you had 10 feet of water pouring down here with 8 to 10 feet of waves on top of it, and all that surge and splash went right up against here and breached the levee for the 17th Street, here and I believe there.

□ 2215

So it was the perfect storm, but it was a perfect storm that was predicted. It was actually predicted in The Times Picayune newspaper in late 2002, if I have my dates right. I have read all of the articles. It is extraordinarily informative. There is one that says, "Worst Case Scenario." What I have just described was the worst case scenario.

But, nonetheless, I sat in on that briefing, engaged in that briefing, gave a little talk to the people there working, giving their hearts out for the people in the gulf coast region. They are proud of the work that they do. They are humble people with an inner pride. As I stood and looked them in the eye, I could feel that commitment to Americans, dedication to Americans, all of us pulling together. People from all over the United States came down to work in the gulf coast region to provide relief as fast as they possibly could. They gave their all.

The airport in New Orleans, the Louis Armstrong International Airport, was separated into several different areas. One concourse was a hospital and triage area. There were two other areas for the victims of the flood, the future evacuees. And then the troops and the rescue workers, they would find any place they could to sleep. Sometimes there would be room. Sometimes it was a corner, if they slept at all.

They went to work. They went to work to save lives. They peaked out there on one of these days at the rate of 10,000 lives a day being pulled out of New Orleans through the operations there at the airport.

We know that the Coast Guard saved a high number. The last number I heard was 9,000. I expect it is more than that.

The numbers of people now in shelters has been diminishing significantly. There is a steady rotation of people coming through. As flood victims, they are still giving up. Some people like to stay in their homes. They are realizing this is going to be a long time, so they are starting to come out. As they come out, there are people being placed in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama and further up in the United States.

I am happy to say that the Fifth Congressional District of Iowa has welcomed some victims of Hurricane Katrina. All of us are reaching out. What we are seeking to do in the Fifth District of Iowa is ask the county seat mayors to conduct a meeting. Many had those meetings, bring with them and ask to sit at the table the county emergency manager, the pastoral groups, representatives of the churches within the county, the school administrators and the top employers in the counties so we can get a sense of what jobs are available.

What we want to do and are positioning ourselves, I call it the tour guide technique. I want to make sure that we have a household that is identified that is ready to receive a family. I want to make sure there is a place in the school for the children that might come. I want to make sure that house is ready, and the people know when they pull into town, whether on a bus or plane, they get off of their transportation, whichever mode it is, there would stand the mayor with a smile and a handshake and welcome them to the city. Also next to him would be a pastor of the faith of their choice, if they had a choice, and next to him or her would be a sponsoring family that will help them get acclimated to the community and any other resources they might need. We will help with job placement and interviews. That is happening all over this country.

I would like it to be one-stop shopping within the county and determine how many families we can take within each county and set up that system so people do not go off into the unknown.

The evacuees have lived in that region all of their life, and now they have to do something different. There is no housing available near New Orleans. Baton Rouge is full. There are no hotel rooms anywhere there.

I had the privilege of using a Red Cross cot the night before last. They gave me a little place in the corner to lay down and sleep, and I am grateful for their hospitality.

What I saw in that first day after the briefing, I hitched a ride in a helicopter. I flew around the city, a couple of laps around the Superdome and over along the top of Lake Pontchartrain, back around here, and there is another region that is outside of the picture. That entire levee dike is gone. They do not have any protection from the Gulf of Mexico from this way.

We flew all of the way down here on the other side of the Mississippi River. Right here is the Corps of Engineers' headquarters where they weathered the storm right here on the banks of the Mississippi River. Right across from them is the grain handling terminals. I believe that is the largest one on the river. It appears there is not structural damage, and we have heard reports there is a fair opportunity within the next couple of weeks to see grain shipments get up near its previous volume that it had.

We looked over this entire city and flew over the water and wind damage. Some places outside of the water you will see wind damage where it wiped out block after block, some houses into kindling. You can see where the footings were of the houses and the square spots. The numbers of devastation was by far the worst. In New Orleans the people suffered the worst, but it is not the worst place for damage, though.

After the morning of traveling around and looking at New Orleans from the air and getting a sense of how this water sits here and how bad this damage is, then I went over to the Corps of Engineers and had a long and significant conversation with the colonel who was on duty during the flood, who was also in command at the Corps of Engineers the day I was there.

He talked about the flood event and talked about the difficulties they had, and he talked about the hydrology. And since that is my background, doing drainage work and river channelization, we are always looking for ways to manage water in an efficient fashion. It is an interest in my life. It is a background in my profession. Because of that, I feel an obligation to understand New Orleans, and I think I do, at least in the broader text.

I cannot say I have enough information to say that I understand the details yet, and I do not think anyone does. But I have most of these elevations memorized and committed to memory and most of the elevations along these levee district canals, so I have a sense what happens when the water goes up. We call it stacked water in Iowa, and they call it a surge down there. But I have a sense of how this all fits together, and where the pump stations are. They are scattered all over, and the Corps of Engineers had to go in and use their portable pumps to go in and pump down around them to work, renovate them, and get those pumps up and going again. That has been extraordinary work.

As I listen to the volume of water that they are pumping and their prediction on where they would get, and knock on wood they got where they hope to be since I was there some time yesterday afternoon, but their prediction was within 36 hours they would have another three pump stations up online. If that happened, and they cautioned there are no guarantees in the flood recovery business, and I have been through my own floods, especially

1993, but if those pumps came online, there would be 27,000 cubic feet per second pumped out of this bowl that is New Orleans.

I do not have the elevations on how far below sea level that is, except the water was 16 feet deep in the deepest parts. That indicates at least to some degree how far below sea level that is. The pumping that is going on at 27,000 cubic feet per second, and my recollection is that the Missouri River in the central part of the United States in Yankton, South Dakota, releases about 11,000 cubic feet per second during the winter time, the nonbarge season. I know how that river flows at 11,000 cubic feet per second, and those numbers would indicate that the Corps of Engineers and the city pumps for New Orleans are pumping not quite two and a half times the flow that comes down the Missouri River past Sioux City, Iowa. That is a tremendous amount of water.

They will get ahead of this water. I believe they set a date of October 8. Lord willing and if the creek does not rise and it does not rain, they should get the water pumped out of New Orleans by about October 8. Given the volume, that is an extraordinary accomplishment. All of the lives that have been saved and all the people that have been lifted out are also an extraordinary accomplishment.

The time will come to learn from what we have done here, but it is too early to point the finger of blame. It is too early to come in and say some people did not try hard enough because they had a bias. That is just utterly wrong. There is no division between Americans when it comes to a crisis. We look at each other and we see Americans, and that is as far as it goes.

After the briefing at the Corps of Engineers, I hitched a ride on a different helicopter and went from there on down the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico about 90 miles south of New Orleans. Today, there is some question whether it is 90 miles south or 75 miles south. The Gulf of Mexico has invaded and come upstream a ways. That is an indistinct line today because of the storm.

We flew along the Mississippi River, and along that river there are two dikes. There is a river dike. This would be well south of here, south all of the way down to the Gulf of Mexico, that 75 to 90 miles. There is a river dike that is approximately 25 feet above sea level. That was built by the Corps of Engineers to protect the boats for shipping up and down. The shipping was moving the day before yesterday, and there was a lot of traffic in the river. I could see it accelerating as the day went on. That dike was on one side.

Approximately a half mile to the west is another dike, and that dike is approximately the same elevation. I do not know what elevation it is. It appears to be about the same given where the water stands, and that protects the

other side of the dike and about that half mile wide strip in the middle from the surge and the storms and the hurricanes from the gulf.

So you have a strip of land between two dikes, a dike on either side about 25 feet above sea level, half a mile wide strip in the middle, with a highway down the top of one of them. People think they have protection from the levees. They think, I have a levee on the front side, on the river and on the gulf side, and so how could you be more safe than down here in between them.

Mr. Speaker, there is community after community along that 75- or 80-mile stretch; and these communities do not look to have been very big. They look like there were approximately 300 people here, 700 people there, typical small communities in that flat-bottom ground, a little farming going on and not any big volume. Every once in awhile there is an oil refinery, and at one location there was a heliport to service the oil platforms out in the gulf.

As we flew along that, and, remember, I had been desensitized by about 2 hours in the air over New Orleans, I looked at where trees were down, houses flooded up to the roof tops, roof tops with holes chopped in them that people had climbed through, and after seeing that for a couple of hours, you get desensitized. But as we went south along the Mississippi River, I found that the desensitization that had taken place and the numbness that sets in after seeing all of that destruction did not condition me for the condition of that strip of land between those two dikes.

That is some of the most utter destruction that I have ever seen in my life, and it is the longest expanse I have ever seen. As you watched that, I began to piece together what happened. Down there, there were homes from an entire community that were just blown away. Sometimes the buildings were just shattered, and there would be just kindling stacked up against the dikes with all kinds of trash, boards and jugs, you name it. But entire communities were just plain footings there for the houses. Maybe a flat concrete pad was there. Community after community was like that. Sometimes there would be a church or school left standing. In one town, part of the school was left standing, but next to the school the water tower was blown down, crashed, bent, destroyed.

□ 2230

And I have seen some destruction in my life, and I have seen power antennas, towers go down. I saw telephone poles that were blown clear out of the ground. But I have never seen a water tower pushed down by the force of nature in my life. But that water tower went down. And we got a picture of the water tower, and I did not commit the name of the community to memory, but I can go back and look at that. And a number of those communities took

similar devastation, but all of the rest of the water towers stuck together. That went down.

There was one family location, and I think this is a time to look at a representative example, Mr. Speaker. This is a building location, and it appears to be a dwelling; but it may have been a dwelling and a shop. This is steel piling that has been driven down into the ground so that it can withstand hurricane-force winds. Hurricane-force winds, at least Category 4½ or so, blew that sheet metal clear on through the building, stripped it down just to the I-beams that were driven to the ground. And the rubble that is laying around, there is no such thing as a representative sample. It is just everything was its unique piece of disaster, and pieces of property of the family were scattered all over; but there was this time, who knows, hundreds of thousands all over in that region.

There is no way, Mr. Speaker, that anyone can get a handle on the scope of this disaster without having flown over the region in its entirety, got down and talked to the people in the shelters and spent some time there, and I did not get to spend enough time there, and then go out on the ground and walk among this kind of disaster. But one of these places, very near where the water tower was blown down, there was a set of buildings that looked something like this. They were all shredded into this unrecognizable gnarly metal mass, and a flagpole had survived. There is no way that a flag would survive like this; but the flagpole, I guarantee it had been bent severely, but it had survived.

And this poor fellow who did not have anything except a mass and the mess he cleaned up did not have value, had not started that project yet. He had to come in there on a boat, and he had to go over to that flagpole and he ran Old Glory up to the tip of that flagpole, and there it flew in all its glory. And I can tell my colleagues it catches our eye, Mr. Speaker, when we see something like that, that sign of patriotism, that sign of defiance, that sign of determination that says, Katrina, you did not get to me. This might slow me down a little bit. It is a bump in the road, and, in fact, it is a pretty severe bump in the road, but you cannot break people's spirit that is as strong as these people's spirit is. And I saw that spirit in the floods in 1993 when we had those in Iowa when people pulled together, and I see this spirit down in the gulf coast today, Mr. Speaker.

So as we flew over that disaster, we began to see piece after piece of costly damage by that storm. The water had surged up the Mississippi River. The wind and the low pressure had sucked the water up, and the wind had driven it up the Mississippi River. And when we think about a river that has got 25-foot high levees on either side, to push that up that high and have that splash up and over the top of the levee, and in a lot of cases the levee held, but the water spilled over the top but did not breach it.

In that surge it lifted up grain barges; then put them up on the dry, some of them as high as clear at the top of the dike. And there is one tow there that I happened to notice, a tow being, Mr. Speaker, that when one ties a bunch of barges together, whatever size that is that they go down the river with, that is called a tow. And for us in the upper part of the Mississippi River, about 15 barges is a pretty good tow.

Down there 40 is not too many, but I happened to see one that had 30 barges in the tow; and of the 30, 25 of them were still tied together. The other five barges had gone off somewhere, and some had been pushed up on the dry. A couple were capsized, I could see. Some of them turned over on their side. But 25 of the 30-barge tow were all lifted up off the surface of that water. The water actually lifted them and floated them up and set them up on the bank, 25 barge tows all still tied together, all sitting up on the high and dry.

Ships that were just pushed together and shattered; shrimp boats by the dozen, 15 of them in one cluster just shoved up against the levee, tipped over. Some completely capsized, a lot of them on their sides. There was one company, I think it would be a single company, that had what I call tender boats, and these boats were painted yellow and blue. They were all painted the same. They had nine of them that I could find, and who knows if there were others that might have been sunk or blown out to sea; but these boats are, I am going to guess, 75 or more feet long, maybe as much as 90 feet long; and I expect they are the kind that go out to lift the catch off of the smaller shrimper boats that were stacked up all along the levee, and most of them were destroyed.

But these tender boats, these larger ones, the yellow and blue ones, of the nine that I counted the day before yesterday, Mr. Speaker, there were two of them that were sitting side by side right on top of the levee, right dead center in the highway, one in one lane and one in the other lane, tied side by side 25 feet above the water. That storm surge had lifted them up and set them in the middle of the dike. And the other seven identical boats were all apparently tied together so that they would ride out the storm better, and they apparently stayed together.

But of those, three were floating in the channel and four of them were up on the dry. So of the nine, six were up on the dry, two of them in the middle of the highway up on top of the levee, and four of them sitting up, I suppose, 10 or 12 feet above the water level. We take somebody's lifetime work and lifetime dream and see something like that happen to it, yes, they can put it all back and they can recover; but the magnitude, the awe, the power of this storm was, again, beyond a person's ability to comprehend unless we go down there and look at that and study it.

But the water surged up the Mississippi and floated barges out on top

of the dike and took ocean-going vessels and put them up on the dry, large ones; and that was powerful. The wind blew so hard that it just blew all of the buildings over and stacked them up against the levee on the other side, shattered them, and took tree after tree. And the trees that stood, the leaves were blown off of them. They stood there with just branches, and a lot of times the branches were not broken so much as the velocity of the wind just plucked the leaves off and left a forest there that looked like December in Iowa, not September in Louisiana. So, Mr. Speaker, it was a disaster beyond my ability to understand the scope of it until I went and took a look.

By the way, that surge in the Mississippi River that floated things up over the levee, a surge also came back from the gulf side that did nearly the same thing or maybe even equal to the same thing from the gulf side. So they had water from both sides, a surge as high as 27 or more feet; and that water came so fast that actually last night I talked to a shrimperman there in northeastern New Orleans who had five boats, three of which were up on the dry and mostly destroyed, and two of them survived. They were on the west of New Orleans. And he said that he had a friend that was in his house when that surge of water came, that wall of water came; and it was approximately 3 minutes from the time the water started to rise until he had to have a hole cut in his roof to get out through the attic when the water raised that fast. Only 3 minutes to get ready for that kind of a disaster because of that low pressure center and that push of that wind, Mr. Speaker. It was an awesome thing, and the scope of this disaster is also quite awesome.

Then after we came back from there, I went over to the Red Cross headquarters, their center, and in that center I walked around and talked to some people, looked at the resources that they had. And it was very well presented by the Red Cross people. I know some of them. In fact, I ran into six Iowans down there that were hard at work, saving lives and helping people and doing so in a very friendly and warm way. I do think we can be proud of these rescue workers. They are working 20, 21 hours a day. Some of them snapped. Some of them pushed themselves to the point where they snapped, and they have got to be taken off duty for a day or so; otherwise they will not be good for the rest of this disaster.

So, Mr. Speaker, I borrowed a cot from the Red Cross and laid down and got a little sleep. The next day was not a day to look at disaster from the air as I did here on the first day; but it was a day to go visit the centers, a day to visit the people, a day to have conversations with them and get a feel for what they had gone through. And as I walked through the gymnasiums that are the shelters for the victims of the

hurricane, I talked to a number of the victims there, and found one that would like to come and be a truck driver, and he had a commercial driver's license. I think we can help a person like that. We carried some communications for some other people that were having a little trouble getting their communications out. I talked to people that were serving in the Red Cross center from places like Michigan, Ohio, I mentioned Iowa, Minnesota, California.

And I want to say a kind word about Californians. According to their measure or some report's measure, perhaps more than 50 percent of the Red Cross workers at least in that region are from California, and that is an opportunity to say a word about that kind of an effort that is coming out of that State. There are California people all over helping people from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama.

The military took some criticism, Mr. Speaker, because it was alleged that they reacted late. But yesterday when I was in Slidell, Louisiana, and that is a town right near the Mississippi border, one of the guards in the shelter there was walking through, and I stopped to talk to him. I remember his name. He is Specialist Cunningham. He was part of the 311th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama; and I asked him when he came into the storm zone. And he said, Sir, we took off on Monday afternoon.

I said, How did you do that?

He said, Well, we came across Mississippi, coming to the west, and some of those places we could not get through the road. So they used chainsaws. They used Humvees. They used chains. They pulled trees out of the way. They cut their way through. In fact, General Myers announced to us that was how the National Guard got in. They chainsawed their way in. I met a specialist from the 311th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama that actually did that. And as I listened to him talk and the 300 people that are part of that battalion, that is the kind of heroism that did not just quite make it to the mainstream news media.

And when we look at an area that is 93,000 square miles, the size of Kansas, and we have a mainstream media that is concentrating on looking for the story, looking for the hot spot, trying to find someone that will step up in front of the camera and utter a complaint about the service that they are not getting, that is one element of this, and I will not deny that some of that exists; but there is a whole huge other element out there in 89,000 square miles of that 90,000 square miles where we have thousands and thousands of heroes, thousands and thousands of stoic victims of this storm, and thousands and thousands of people whose lives will never be the same, Mr. Speaker.

So as I met with them and listened to them, it reminded me of the times when I had seen lives shattered in other natural disasters, in particular

our 1993 flood, and that touches a nerve and touches a cord with me because of my own personal experience with that storm, and I will save that for another time, Mr. Speaker, on my particular experience in the 1993 flood. But I believe that was the force that motivated me to go down there. That was the force that caused me to want to see this entire thing.

So after meeting with the victims and the future evacuees and having a conversation around there with the people working in the shelter, seeing the resources that they had, the organization that they had, they need a few more cots and they need a few more nurses and they are squeaking by and they are able to provide, but it is an uplifting thing to see a look in the eye of people who are fulfilling a sense of mission, a sense of duty, a duty to their country, duty to their faith; and it gives everyone strength to be around the kind of people that will commit themselves in that fashion.

Later on in the day I took a drive down into some of the worst damage, and that would be down along a levee that goes into actually northeast of the outlet of Lake Pontchartrain, south of Slidell. And down in there there are homes on the both sides of the levee. One might go for a half mile or a mile and not see a home intact, not see anything but the stubs of pilings where homes were where all of them had been blown away. And that disaster was so bad that we see the rare exception when there was a building that was held together that was intact.

I walked through there and looked at some of the things that I found, and some of the things that we see bring it home. They bring home what kind of suffering there is, and some of it is symbolism, Mr. Speaker, but I do have a picture here that shows some kind of symbol that these are real people.

□ 2245

This caught my eye, Mr. Speaker. This would have been an anniversary gift that was given, probably from husband to wife. It has two doves on the top, and it says, "Happy Anniversary," and it is laying in the rubble, just like that, that is untouched; I just walked up, and this was yesterday afternoon late, and I took this picture. I noticed that one of the doves is still in tact here on top of this material, but one of the doves is broken and laying here. When I saw that, I had to ask myself the question, do we know if a fallen dove is a fallen dove? Is one of this couple gone? Has one been blown away and lost to the storm and one is left to survive, or are they both okay and looking for each other? This kind of a scene, a scenario of families that are separated has been replayed over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

So there is a lot of human suffering, and the breadth of this and the depth of this is not something that is understood yet by the American people or by

this Congress, which is why I bring this message to the floor of the House of Representatives, so that America can take another step to begin to understand the damage down there.

I will tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that I think we should do everything we can to rescue people, to help them recover, to place them, to make this next phase of their lives more comfortable, easier, give some sense of certainty and some sense of confidence. But, at the same time, those resources that go to that we cannot hold back, but we need a plan. We need an overall plan on, first of all, the question was asked whether we are going to rebuild New Orleans. And I want to hear from the people in New Orleans, the people in Louisiana and, of course, the people in this country. But as I look at it, I see a city that has a unique character and it has a spirit, and it sits there today awfully quiet with nothing going on, high-rise buildings, the Superdome, the core of downtown New Orleans simply standing there dormant, waiting for occupants, waiting for the water to go down and the services to go on and people to come in and occupy.

If we rebuild New Orleans to the size and scope that it was and the population that has been driven from there does not come back to New Orleans, then we will have some services that are overbuilt for the numbers of people that it will be servicing. If we rebuild New Orleans and start rebuilding homes that were destroyed, bulldoze neighborhoods where every house was destroyed and go back in and start building homes again and the disaster hits again, that is good money after bad.

So, Mr. Speaker, I propose that we put together a plan, a plan to save the city, a plan that would, I will say, construct the outlet of Lake Pontchartrain in such a way that a Category 5 hurricane cannot drive that water up into Lake Pontchartrain. Construct floodgates at the inlets of the canals, such as the 17th Street Canal, so that if something fails on the outlet, a hurricane levee protection of Lake Pontchartrain so that Lake Pontchartrain did fill it with water, that the flood gates will protect it so that New Orleans cannot be flooded again.

And I propose, Mr. Speaker, that we go in to every one of those 30 or 40 or more pump stations that are there and raise them up to an elevation high enough that no matter how severe the storm, that it cannot knock out the pumps and we would have a third way to protect the city.

This is not cheap, but New Orleans is a shipping city; New Orleans is a city with a tremendously pivotal economic location. It will be a city; with or without Federal help, it will be constructed as a city again, but we need to put the mitigation in place, the fail-safe system in place so there are actually three places to protect the city. The hurricane wall and levee for the outlet of Lake Pontchartrain, the floodgates

along the top of Lake Pontchartrain to keep the water out of the city, and then disaster-proof the lift stations, the pump stations that are all over that city so that they do not shut down, so that we can protect the city.

And then, if perhaps 25 percent of the people do not come back to New Orleans, if they decide that they are going to make their future where they find themselves relocated, then those low grounds that I showed on the previous chart, that dark brown in particular, that area should be put to some other use other than houses so that we are not pulling people out of the water again. Perhaps it becomes a park. We will wait for some architect to come up with a good idea for that.

But I am for helping people, and I am for a long-term plan to do the right thing. I do not think we need to be in a desperate hurry to rebuild New Orleans in the shortest time possible. I think this is a long-term event, and some of this damage that took place was to work that was done more than 100 years ago. We can put this work together in a fashion that is sequential to protect the city of New Orleans and build for the future, and it can be a more vibrant city than it has ever been before. It can still have its unique culture, and it can possibly have a culture that changes, but a unique culture. It can be economically viable and it can bring to this Nation the component of glory that it has given to us in the past and be a great city to visit in and live in, but we need to have an intelligent plan.

It is Congress's job to do that, Mr. Speaker. It is our job to initiate appropriations, and it is our job to safeguard those appropriations, and it is our job to listen to the people of America and put a plan in place, Mr. Speaker. That is my message to the American people.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this House of Representatives this evening, and I look forward to many discussions about how we are going to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DEFAZIO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of district business.

Mrs. MALONEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week.

Mr. McNULTY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. WALSH (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and September 14 on account of a death in the family.

Mr. McHUGH (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending a funeral.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. HERSETH, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. McCARTHY, for 5 minutes, today. Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today. Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today. Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and September 14, 15, and 16.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, September 20.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, September 14.

Mr. MCHENRY, for 5 minutes, September 14 and 15.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, September 15.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. TRANDAHL, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 804. An act to exclude from consideration as income certain payments under the national flood insurance program.

H.R. 3669. An act to temporarily increase the borrowing authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for carrying out the national flood insurance program.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 252. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land in Washoe County, Nevada, to the Board of Regents of the University and Community College System of Nevada.

S. 264. An act to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize certain projects in the State of Hawaii.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff TRANDAHL, Clerk of the House, reports that on September 8, 2005 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 3650. Federal Judiciary Emergency Special Sessions Act of 2005.

H.R. 3673. Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From the Consequences of Hurricane Katrina, 2005.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.