

access around one of the headquarters. We have electricians who are trying to wire the school so that they can use the generators, at least have some basics for the troops.

This is the National Guard at their finest. Many of these troops have just recently returned from Iraq. They have not even been home 6 months, and many are signed up to go to Afghanistan next March; but I did not hear a single complaint. They said, this is a great mission. We are saving people's lives. We can see we are making a difference here. We are proud to serve.

I am proud as an Oregonian to represent many of these individuals. The Guard is a tremendous success story in a disaster which has too many other problems, things that must be investigated by Congress in terms of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, returning it to being an independent, professionally run, high-functioning agency. Many of us objected to putting it in Homeland Security. We were all too right, unfortunately.

We must oversee the relief and recovery effort. The government is borrowing and spending \$500 million a day. That must be strictly overseen to make sure there is not crisis profiteering that has happened after some other disasters and other hurricanes. Congress has a role in that, and Congress then is going to have to look at the rebuilding effort in terms of the infrastructure that serves that area, the intricate infrastructure, the Corps of Engineers and what steps we are taking for the future, where we will rebuild, and how we will protect those things.

It will be massively expensive; and in the face of that massive expense, in addition to a deficit, I hope that the President and the majority party drop their push for more tax cuts for the wealthiest among us. Those who earn more than \$300,000 a year and those who have estates worth more than \$6 million, should they not contribute to this effort? Are they not part of this country, or do they just live behind walled compounds with their private security and their private jets?

We are all in this together, as was demonstrated by my citizen soldiers who are not paid a whole heck of a lot of money to do this. So let us do this right. Let us recognize the National Guard and others who volunteered and have done so well. So far let us support their effort, and let us enter into this rebuilding effort in a wise and cost-efficient way, protecting both the taxpayers and the people who have been ravaged by this storm.

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

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

POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Congressional Black Caucus has decided to discuss poverty.

I am a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 234 and would like to see the President present a plan to eradicate poverty by 2010.

Hurricane Katrina devastated the lives of people who were already living well under the poverty level. I have concerns with the slow response and weak leadership of the Federal and State agencies. I have concerns that many of the affected States have Medicaid-eligibility criteria that are too harsh. I have concerns about our overcrowded and underfunded safety net hospitals.

I have concerns that since our current President took office there are 5.4 million more people in poverty, 6 million more without health insurance, and the median income is down more than \$1,600 a year.

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As relates to these statistics, the most affected State is the home State of the President, Texas. What we saw on television during the hurricane was the face of poverty. People with resources left early. Only ones with the least resources had to depend on their government for a safety net. The safety net had holes that need repair. Denying minimum wage to help with the cleanup and the Halliburton Company in charge, opportunities are dismal. Only the President can correct this.

We still are being asked, was it racism? My response to the question: It is the face of poverty U.S.A. Was it racism? You answer the question. If it was, it did not start with Katrina. We need measures to eradicate poverty. Mr. President, let us not continue the trends of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. As we move closer to a rich and poor society with the middle income disappearing, I plead with all of us, and the President, to address this problem.

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

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

POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking and ap-

plauding our colleague, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, who will lead the next hour for the concurrent resolution she has introduced and which I cosponsor which everyone ought to support which affirms the obligation and leadership of the United States to improve the lives of the 37 million Americans living in poverty, 13 million of which are children.

The entire country and indeed the world got but a glimpse of the big picture as we watched in horror as the floods washed away the facade and exposed the poverty that exists in this the richest and most powerful Nation in the world. The added tragedy was the insensitivity and lack of urgency with which Katrina's victims were treated.

The moral question we are faced with today and which every person in this country must answer is, what are we going to do about it? As leaders of this Nation, we have the obligation to begin that answer now.

My colleagues and I tonight will be joining Congresswoman LEE to lead us in that response.

What everyone else saw perhaps for the first time was not a surprise to us. We have come to this body, to task forces and committee meetings, here to the well of the House and to countless press conferences to tell the world that this level of poverty exists, that it disproportionately includes African Americans and other people of color. And we have called on the Congress and the White House through our budget proposals and legislative agenda to repair the breach in our human condition, largely to no avail.

While the events of the last 2 weeks have spoken volumes in ways our words could not, we must not let what happened in Alabama, Mississippi, and even more so in Louisiana ever happen again. So as we appropriate dollars to fix the levees and other infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed, we must also fix the social and economic infrastructure which failed so many and exacerbated the tragedy, and we must repair broken lives for the short and long term. That includes repairing a very deficient and dysfunctional health care delivery system in rural areas, the territories, and communities of color.

Almost as a last warning before the storm hit and the flood waters surged came the new numbers from the Census Bureau on income, poverty, and health insurance status in this country. Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are three of our poorest states. In these states, about six in every ten African Americans are living at or below the Federal poverty line.

In the wake of the storm and even before the waters began to recede came a second report as a reminder of how deep we have to reach into America's psyche to repair the damage. That report, Closing the Gap: Solutions to Race Based Health Disparities, assessed and analyzed the impact that social determinants, such as economic,

social, environmental, and cultural inequities, have on health and health care. These inequities provide a medium in which poverty not only continues to exist but thrives.

Poverty is perhaps the most closely aligned determinate of ill health. It then should follow that the elimination of poverty would go a long way to eliminating the long-standing health care inequities that result in health care disparities for African Americans and other people of color that are the shame of this wealthy Nation.

It is my hope that this country, my country, will never forget Katrina and recognize that what was laid bare is only a fraction of what exists, particularly in the South but throughout this country.

As leaders, I hope my colleagues will join us to ensure that the infrastructure is put in place so that nowhere across the United States will such a preventable travesty ever happen again.

Part of that would be to pass our legislation to create health empowerment zones in communities such as those in which poverty and the concurrent ill health trapped their victims. This legislation would assist and empower them to address health care challenges and improve the public health infrastructure as well as mitigate the social, environmental, and economic determinants of health.

It is part of a larger legislative initiative for which we also ask your support, the Heal America Act of 2005, a comprehensive bill, a sort of Marshall Plan for health that would reverse the dynamics that lead to the disproportionate death, disease, and disability which people of color suffer.

Lastly, not allowing this to ever happen again includes not cutting Medicaid. Not only is it needed in this crisis, which has been described as in biblical proportions, but it is needed in the everyday crises that result in over 100,000 preventable premature deaths in people of color every year. My colleagues, this, too, is the annual unacknowledged catastrophe that we can and must prevent.

Mr. Speaker, let us honor the memory of the victims of Katrina and the suffering of the survivors by eradicating poverty, by creating a fair, equitable and just health care system and by building a better America where there is the guarantee of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

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

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

DOWNING STREET MEMOS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, today, the occupation of Iraq continues and we learn that another bomb blast, in fact a series of bomb blasts in Iraq have resulted in the loss of more than 100 lives. So far, the loss of American servicemen and women's lives is almost 2,000. We have lost almost 2,000 American servicemen and women in Iraq.

The American people are asking now with greater frequency a very significant question: Why did we invade Iraq and why are we continuing to occupy that country?

Today, the House Committee on International Relations defeated a Resolution of Inquiry, which I introduced, and that defeat came essentially along party lines. Every Democratic member of the House Committee on International Relations voted for the resolution; one Republican voted for it; one Republican did not oppose it. But the resolution lost by one vote because all of the other Republicans on the committee opposed it.

What this resolution asked was simply this. It asked the administration, the White House, and the Defense Department to provide to the Congress information with regard to that information which is contained in the so-called Downing Street memos.

The Downing Street memos are very interesting. They were first revealed by the Sunday Times of London on May 1, 2005. What these Downing Street memos are, are high-level communications between some of the most significant members of the British Government, including Prime Minister Tony Blair; Richard Dearlove, who was the head of British intelligence; Jack Straw, the foreign secretary; and others.

These Downing Street memos were communications between these high-ranking officials of the British Government. They reveal the essence of conversations which took place between members of the British Government and members of the Bush administration here in Washington, including Condoleezza Rice, Vice President CHENEY, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and others.

What the Downing Street memos reveal is that, from the very beginning, the Bush administration was obsessed with Saddam Hussein and that they used the attack of September 11 not to go after the perpetrators of that attack, Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network, but to twist and distort the facts in order to justify an attack against Iraq, given the obsession that they had with Saddam Hussein.

So the resolution that I introduced today, and which was defeated by the House Committee on International Relations, called upon the executive branch of government, the White House and the Defense Department, to provide to the Congress information with regard to those conversations from the

American perspective. All we have now is the British perspective. And the British perspective is quite damning indeed, damning of the intentions of the Bush administration and the way in which this ensuing occupation has been carried out.

The Downing Street memos make it clear that high-ranking members of the Bush administration were determined to twist and distort the intelligence and the facts to fit the policy which they had already decided to put into action; and that policy, of course, was to attack Iraq and to remove Saddam Hussein as the head of that government.

Many people across our country, including an increasing number of the House of Representatives, and I believe the Senate as well, are asking the question: How could that attack be justified when we now know that the ostensible justification, the justification which was set forth by the administration, was completely false?

First, that justification was that Iraq had something to do with the attack of September 11. Then the administration had to back off from that assertion when it became clear to almost everyone that there was no validity in that assertion whatsoever. Rapidly, the administration moved to an assertion that it was important for us to attack Iraq because Iraq possessed so-called weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons. And the suggestion was even made over and over and over again, by the highest ranking officials of the Bush administration, that the Iraqi government was acquiring nuclear weapons, that they had imported enriched uranium from Niger into Iraq in order to manufacture atomic bombs, and that we were in danger of having those nuclear weapons used against us. So, therefore, they sought in that way to justify an attack against Iraq.

It is now clear to almost everyone, even the most myopic of persons, that Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction program and was nowhere near the development of any nuclear weapons.

And as is made clear by the information that is possessed in these Downing Street memos, other countries were much more dangerous, including Libya, Iran, and North Korea, because they were much closer to developing nuclear weapons than was Iraq, which had essentially abandoned all of its large-scale weapons programs in 1991. That information had been made clear as a result of investigations which were carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency and by weapons inspections teams, two of them in fact from the United States. They found no evidence of any weapons of mass destruction.

So information from the administration about these Downing Street memos is essential. Why the Committee on International Relations defeated that resolution today remains to be seen, but we will be back. We will be