

word, we will spread this warning. Leave our children alone or face a lifetime of severe, unpleasant and unremitting consequences.

Mr. Speaker, we are not judged by the way we treat the rich, the famous, the powerful, the important. We are judged by the way we treat the innocent, the weak, the children of our community; and it is time that we focus on what is important for them rather than maybe on other issues in our culture.

So it is our resolve, Mr. Speaker, as a Nation, to those child predators, we say, you cannot run, you cannot hide, you cannot avoid justice. Because as injustice hopefully will soon fade away, justice will rule this day. That is just the way it is.

30 SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again, it is an honor to come before the House of Representatives; and, also, we would like to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Democratic leader; and also the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the whip; and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the caucus chairman; and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN) who is our vice chair, and all of the hard-working Members of this Congress.

I think it is important for us to remember, and I think in a few short minutes the President will address the country from New Orleans and the French Quarter, about the Federal commitment to the hurricane-devastated areas. He will be in Louisiana, but I would assume he will also be addressing Mississippi, Alabama and some of the other surrounding areas that were affected by Katrina.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is important that we look at the contrast of what exactly the Federal commitment will be. There has been a lot of words, a lot of Federal jet fuel burned of the President and the Vice President going down to the affected area. There has been a lack of organized congressional visits for us to even understand what those people are going through in the South.

We are going to be talking a little bit about, the 30 Something Working Group, the Federal commitment and the response not only to rescue and recovery but also the response to a national tragedy.

There have been some good statements and some very disturbing statements, and I think the Members need to realize what has been said, what has been done and what has not been done.

I think it is important, if we are going to follow through on some of

these statements that have been made here on this floor, if we are going to follow through on what the President would say tonight in another 20 minutes to the country, are we going to be here for the long haul or are we going to give the people affected in the South what we call here in Washington, D.C., the Potomac two-step?

Are we going to try to ride this media cycle out?

Are we going to allow big-time contractors to go down, make a bucket of money on the back of tragedy and cut the wages for those very same people that were victims? Are we going to allow that to happen?

Are we going to allow this House, in a vote that we took today, that I voted against, not that I am not in solidarity of the reason why we wanted to put together a select committee of the oversight of what happened in Hurricane Katrina, but the fact that the people of the South are not getting what the 9/11 families got and the American people got after 9/11.

So there is a reason I think why we are heading off, and there are strange votes that are taking place. We say we do not want to politicize the process, but we step out on politics. We say we want to get to the truth, either it be city or parish or State or Federal Government, but, better yet, we take congressional action that does not even carry the language to allow us to get to the truth, does not have the bipartisan not only flavor but bipartisan language.

If we are going to do something in the Congress to find out where government failed, where nonprofit failed and not have a 50-50 relationship with the majority side to be able to get to the truth, we are going to see partisan votes on that select committee.

I stand with the Democratic leader and I know many of the 30 Something Working Group stand with the Democratic leader as it makes to not even making an announcement now, even if we are going to appoint Members to that select committee because I will tell you 710 lives that have been lost. Better yet, we are going to appoint a committee just like it is regular business here in the Congress. Also, the largest supplemental, I must add, in the history of the Congress and this country, outside of a war supplemental. Some are saying it will go to \$200 billion.

□ 1945

Well, if it goes to \$200 billion, what will be the Federal commitment in the end? A, we know the people that will be working in the rebuilding process that are victims of this hurricane will not receive the prevailing wage because Davis-Bacon has been waived. They will not receive what other Federal contractors will receive using Federal money. We know that from the beginning. We are going to shortchange them from the beginning. We know they need money to rebuild, yet we are going to do that.

The whole issue, when it comes right down to it, I say to my colleague from Ohio, is that the Federal commitment is about tomorrow, a national day of prayer over at the cathedral, and that is fine, we can pray for them. But we are the Congress. We are supposed to act on behalf of those individuals that cannot stand for themselves. So I want to come out tonight and say that individuals that are in the affected area, I believe the country needs to rally around them and demand a 9/11-like commission.

We are going to let politicians stand in judgment of politicians? We are going to let a majority party stand in judgment of the majority in the executive branch? The same party that says, oh, we will get to the bottom of this, even if it is embarrassing? Well, people have lost their lives, yet we are going to sit around here as though it is another day at the office? I think not.

There are individuals right now that have mold in their homes, and individuals right now that still do not have even the simple opportunity to bury their dead. There are children right now that are lost in the hundreds, and yet it is just another day at the office? Excuse me, but I have a problem with that.

Over in the other body across the hall yesterday there was a vote that went down on a partisan party line. One individual from the State, one of the affected States, did not even vote on the amendment, and that amendment called for, down to the last sentence, a 9/11-like commission.

It is very, very unfortunate that partisan politics has found its way into this national tragedy. The only reason why this Congress is getting away with it is the fact that these individuals who have lost their lives are poor. The individuals' homes that are still under water are poor. That is the reason why. So who are we, as a country, to go somewhere else and start talking about what other people should be doing when we are not doing it?

Now, I am not saying the American people are not doing it. I am saying the leadership here in this Congress is not doing it. And if they can sleep well by doing that, so be it. But I will say this, that I believe the American spirit will rise on behalf of these individuals who are living in shelters right now and who do not even know what is happening to them.

I think the reason why people are saying, well, we are moving expeditiously and we are trying to do this, that and the other, and we want to make sure people get accountability, is that these are poor individuals, who, by the way, work every day but who may not have the education that the brokers and the stock folks and all of those folks had in 9/11. Now, I supported that 9/11 Commission, and we are better because of it. We are better because there was a 9/11 Commission.

There were families that came to this Congress. It was not the first idea of

the Congress or the administration to have a 9/11 Commission, but thank God that those family members on behalf of their families who had lost their lives took whatever money they had, came to this Congress and made it happen. The only difference between the 9/11 families and these families down south is the fact they had a little more money and had a little more influence. And God bless them for having it.

But I will say right now, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, that we have to stand for these individuals that cannot stand for themselves. That is why we are here. We are not here to represent the haves and have more; we are here to represent the individuals that cannot afford to come here. We are here to represent those who got up early one Tuesday morning voting for representation so that they would be represented in this House, so that Democrats and Republicans alike would be represented in this House and Independents would be represented and those that are too young to vote would be represented.

We come here and stand as though it is business as usual while the body count still goes up, the death toll and the misery. So I do not know how long this media cycle is going to go on. I just do not know. I do not know how long the press will stick with this issue to keep it in the forefront, but we cannot leave these individuals behind. We have to be resilient; and we have to make sure, even if it costs criticism from individuals who may say, well, what do you want us to do? We want you to do the right thing. We want you to pass a resolution that has some teeth in it.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution 437 is a select committee that we cannot even get people to come and talk to us. We have to ask them to come talk to us. So I say to my colleague that this is going to be one of those things, like the Committee on Ways and Means, with partisan votes up and down; like the Committee on Armed Services, partisan votes up and down; like the Committee on Appropriations, partisan votes along party lines. We cannot allow that to happen.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is exactly right. What happened here today, H. Res. 437, is a tragedy. What happened right here on this floor today is a tragedy for the exact reason the gentleman just mentioned.

Now, for those people who are at home and who may not completely understand the whole situation, this body is run by the majority party, which is the Republican Party. And the majority party appoints to the committees members to the Committee on Ways and Means, the Committee on Appropriations, the House Homeland Security Committee, the Subcommittee on

Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs, and all these different committees and subcommittees. The majority appoints more people to the committee than the minority, so they basically control the committee process in the House of Representatives.

Now, some committees have subpoena powers and they can subpoena witnesses. But they will only subpoena witnesses that the majority party wants to subpoena. If the minority party would want to subpoena somebody, they could not because they could not get the power out of the committee without majority party votes. So the majority rules.

What is happening in this Congress and in the House and in the Senate is that the Republican Party controls both Chambers. So the Democrats in the minority have no subpoena power. And what has happened over the past few years here, and the great example is the later Clinton years, with Ken Starr, with the House Committee on Government Reform, the Republican Party that controlled this Chamber, they were the ones conducting the investigation into President Clinton because they had the subpoena power and they had the opportunity to do it.

So what we were trying to say, what the minority party was trying to say, the Democrats were trying to say with H. Res. 437, is this select committee that will oversee and look at how the screwups went about down in the gulf coast should be equal. It should be Democrats and Republicans both having equal subpoena power to oversee the process, because the record for the majority party over the past few years has been atrocious.

Now, let us look at a couple of things. We have talked here many, many times regarding the war, with the weapons of mass destruction, all the prewar intelligence. Has anybody looked into this in a real way, in depth? Subpoenaed witnesses? Anybody? No. Has anybody been fired? No. How about the Medicare bill that we passed at 3 in the morning. Everyone was told here it was \$400 billion. It ends up being 700 or \$800 billion after we already voted for it.

This majority party does not have the credibility, I say to my colleague, the credibility to oversee what is going on here because they are going to do nothing but whitewash this thing. Get out the Brillo pads because we are going to scrub this thing clean, and nothing is going to happen and the country is going to be worse off for it. So, my colleagues, H. Res. 437 is a joke. It is a joke. And there will not be proper investigation.

I just could not believe the debate on the floor today. The gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), a Democrat who lost his home, for God's sake, was here. He is saying, should he not, as a representative of a State in a congressional district that lost lives and homes and property and everything

else, should he not be able to subpoena somebody, just like every other Member of Congress, if I am on that committee? Or should the Democrats, who many lost constituents of the 700-some that we lost, and some of those people were actually represented by Democrats, should the minority party not have the opportunity to subpoena somebody?

But, no, this thing is going to get scrubbed. Where is the transparency? Where is the equal opportunity? Where is the bipartisanship? What this bill says is there is going to be nine Democrats and 11 Republicans.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It is a select committee. It does not have any subpoena power. You cannot subpoena anyone.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. There is not even subpoena power.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I mean, it is like, Will you please come and talk with us?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This thing is a paper tiger. It is going to be a song and dance. So let us get ready. Get out the music and the popcorn because this is going to be nothing but a dog and pony show.

I do not think anything is going to happen here, and it is going to be consistent with a lot of the other pieces of legislation that either came through this body or did not get reviewed.

So I just want to say to my colleague from Florida how disappointed I am, how disappointed the Democrats are, and I encourage the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), our minority leader, to continue her stance and not appoint anybody to this committee. This is a toothless tiger. It is a washing machine to clean up this mess politically. I hope that our leader stands her ground and our leadership and our party stand their ground and just say that this is a joke and to appoint people to this committee would literally be contributing to the problem and lending our credibility to this issue, which I think is a joke.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me just say this in order to clarify the whole issue on subpoenas. In section 5 it calls for joint operations, and it comes down to the majority party. The majority, basically, the bottom line, are the only people that can actually subpoena. So your statement was correct, the minority view on the committee or the Democratic view on the committee, if we wanted a particular individual to be subpoenaed, could not be subpoenaed if we are not in the majority to be able to do so.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Unless the majority wanted to help us.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Of course. And that is in section 5 of the joint operations. But let me just say this. If there was an equal 50-50 power on the committee, then, obviously, there would be time for compromise. Okay, if you want to subpoena this witness, we want to subpoena that witness, and let us just compromise. Even though we do

not fully agree, we will get our members to vote for it.

But let me just say this. I think that it is important for us to remember that this is not the only battle as it relates to making sure that this never, ever happens again, especially after a 9/11 bill passed through, Homeland Security given all this authority, FEMA having the resources to pre-stage the equipment and to be able to move in for it to ever happen again. Whether it is something the Governor did not do in Mississippi or Louisiana or Alabama, or something that the mayor did not do in the town, wherever it may be, Gulfport, New Orleans, what have you, we have to get to the bottom of it.

Americans are pouring their hearts out and their money out, and we are using their taxpayer dollars to send down to the affected areas, and rightfully so, without the proper oversight and without any real congressional review. If a Member of Congress wanted to go down and see exactly what the Federal response was, you cannot go on what we call a congressional visit, go down there on a CODEL. No, you cannot. You have to find your own way down. Good luck, Charlie. You find your own way down there. Catch a bus if you can, or hitch a ride with a friend, or take money out of your own pocket and go.

I happened to get down there on the relief flight taking food and necessities down. That is how I got into the affected area.

□ 2000

The American people can take it for what it is. This is a coordinated campaign. Unfortunately, I do not believe it as a campaign, I see it preventing lives in the future from being lost. I cannot help but look at exactly what is going on.

U.S. News and World Report, "What went wrong?" We will never know.

Another edition, U.S. News and World Report, "Who Screwed Up?" We will never know.

Newsweek, "Poverty, Race, Katrina, Lessons of a National Shame." We will never learn because the majority does not want to learn.

Some may be saying that the 30 Something Working Group, they are on the floor are talking about the majority party's failings with regards to leading and this national tragedy. This is not an issue of being partisan. This is an issue of telling the truth. The bottom line is we always talk about what would be different if we were in the majority.

Well, the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), recommended with the council of ranking members said, let us come back from our break and go into session and give FEMA what it needs to be able to respond to this national tragedy. Number one, it is a shame that FEMA was out of money.

What did they say? The House leadership said, no, we will be back; do not worry about it.

A day later, the President got called out on it. Time was awasting. That means maybe FEMA did not have what it needed to be able to respond to people stuck in the Superdome and in shelters.

And in Mississippi, where I went, in Hancock County, they had sanctioned looting. It was sanctioned because they had no food and no water. It was not a situation where they said, fine, electricity is off, we do not have a lot of law and order going on, so we are going to go into this store and take things. These are individuals who work every day.

Second point, the Democratic leader said we need to make sure that we have a FEMA director that knows what he is doing. This one does not. He needs to step down. Because, obviously, if he was there the day before the storm and his administration was there before the storm and they watched this come in, knowing what the National Weather Center has done, and I am speaking from fact. I went down to Miami, just south of my district in Miami, and met with the director of the Hurricane Center last Friday. He was here before the Committee on Science this week and testified. He told the officials that the levees would break. A Category 4 or Category 5 storm, they will break, so it was not secret.

He called the mayor of New Orleans on Saturday night before the storm and said, Mr. Mayor, your levees potentially will break. The mayor put out the order early Sunday morning, mandatory evacuation. We knew there would be massive flooding from the simulation pattern a year prior to this storm. The officials all knew. They knew within FEMA. The State and city folks knew. The levee board knew.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Everybody knew. Mr. MEEK of Florida. And people died. I think it is important. I think it is important that Mike Brown hung around. The President went down and told Michael Brown that he was doing a good job.

Mr. Speaker, people died. I am not saying that he needs to wear that on his back, but the bottom line is somebody appointed him to that position with no experience whatsoever. It is like me leaving this room, leaving this floor and saying to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), well, you know, I am going to carry out open heart surgery. I know nothing about it, but I stayed in a Holiday Inn Express last night.

You do not get qualifications based upon we need to fill a position, not a FEMA position. That played around, and finally the administration took him out under pressure, not only pressure from the Democratic leader but from the media who started focusing on him, saying things were going poorly because we still do not have good leadership there. He came back to Washington, and he resigned.

Then we called for this 9/11 Commission-like legislation to pass to make sure that this never happens again,

never happens again. Not natural disasters, we have no control over that. That is an act of God. But when it comes down to governance and responsibility and making sure if you are poor, middle class or wealthy in this country that this government will govern on your behalf, and that did not happen. The response to that request was we are going to put together a select committee, we are going to make sure that there is a majority influence on it as relates to the Republican leadership side, and we will not get to the bottom of what happened.

Will we have a lot of show and a lot of folks getting excited in the select committee? I am pretty sure they will have it. But what I am saying, independent individuals, I am talking about people who understand emergency management, individuals who understand weather, regular citizens from the affected areas. Regular citizens were on the 9/11 Commission, a Democratic and Republican appointment, co-chairs, to look at this and professionalize our response on all levels. That will not happen, not right now.

I think it is important that the American people, Members of Congress, no matter what community you represent, if you believe in making sure that people get the same representation, for us to have a 9/11 Commission, and I must add and say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), and we come to the floor to talk about what we should be doing and how we should be doing it or what we are doing on this side of the aisle, it is important for us to know the facts. This is the same Congress in the majority that the 9/11 families came up here, and they voted down two opportunities to set up a 9/11 Commission. This is the same Congress, until it just became overbearing that there were major mistakes in our intelligence, major mistakes and flags, and they are still finding stuff because of the 9/11 Commission that could have saved lives.

Better yet, we came to this floor, the 9/11 bill came to the floor, and we have better intelligence, better communications between Federal, local and State agencies because of their work. It is one of the best pieces of legislation that has passed this floor. So now the difference between the 9/11 families and what has happened down in the South is the fact that these individuals are poor, that they are still in the recovery process, and they have not been heard from yet. They have not been heard from. I think it is important that we give those individuals voice.

I am not saying just Democrats that are concerned about individuals that are affected in affected areas. I am talking about Members of Congress giving them voice to allow them to not ever go through this again and also make sure that they do not become victims when we have contractors with no restraints, no-bid contracts. They can run the tab up to whatever they

can run it up to, and then the President is going to waive Davis-Bacon which allow the people in the recovery process to receive minuscule wages, not what they would ordinarily get from Federal procured work.

I think it is important. The differences:

A, coming back here in session, it would have happened without hesitation if Democrats were in the majority.

B, Michael Brown would have gone to another job long before because of the pressure, and there probably would have been a vote to remove the director, putting pressure on the White House to get someone more qualified.

C, we would have a 9/11-type commission appointed today to start pulling itself together to do the work and make sure this never happened again.

D, the procurement issue, it would not be an issue because there would be proper oversight. These are very serious issues.

The only reason I am saying Democratic leadership versus Republican leadership, because that is exactly the direction we are going in now. The votes that are going down here are partisan votes, not votes on behalf of what we know. We are not talking about a Truman Commission or something that happened 20 or 40 something years ago. We are talking about a 9/11 Commission that is still doing its work, and it is the same administration and the same majority side in Congress.

I am asking for the Members of this House on both sides of the aisle and for the American people not to give up on these poor people. That is the bottom line. Do not give up on them. They are not giving up on us. The American people, community after community, are taking care of the evacuees, taking care of these Americans, but we need to make sure that the government that they pay taxes to, that their children are fighting in a war for, making sure that they are not left behind because they do not have the economic means to be able to come up here to Washington and say we want a commission, we want it now, we want to make sure this never happens for my husband, my neighbor, for my family, for a family member or just someone who is unrepresented in this process.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, The Washington Post reported, just to support the gentleman's argument, five of the eight top Federal management agency officials came to their posts with virtually no experience in handling disasters and now lead an agency whose ranks of seasoned crisis managers have thinned dramatically since 9/11. Five of the top eight FEMA people had no emergency management experience at all. What did we think would happen if we had this kind of tragedy?

I still say it had a lot to do with the number of electoral votes in Louisiana and Mississippi than anything else. Because if it was Florida, with all due respect, they would have been there with

billions of dollars prior to. If it was an election year, everybody would be down there, and the President's brother would be running around campaigning.

I think it is terrible that we have this kind of cronyism going on. We understand. We are not simpletons. We know that a President appoints his friends who make a lot of donations to posts in the executive branch. We know that. That is how it goes. But to appoint these people to FEMA? During a rise in hurricanes? Come on. It is irresponsible.

As far as the committee goes, as far as having a committee, CNN Gallup Poll taken a few days ago, 70 percent of the American people supported an independent panel to investigate our response to Hurricane Katrina. That is 70 percent of the American people, 70 percent of those responding. I think it is important for this body to recognize that this toothless tiger, this paper tiger that we passed today, H. Res. 437, is not what the American people want. They want an independent investigation, bipartisan, equal power among both parties to investigate it so there is no coverups, no whitewashing going on. That is what the American people want.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start talking about something that I think is very important. We are going to do this. This country is going to make sure that we rebuild. The problem that we were talking about with the administration is a big hurdle for us. The money is another hurdle. I cannot believe that with all of the challenges that we have right now in this country that this President cannot go to the wealthiest Americans, his top campaign contributors, and ask them to give back just a wee little bit of their tax cut that they got over the past 4 or 5 years, just a wee little bit to help us fund Hurricane Katrina, to help us fund the war.

We are giving millionaires hundreds of thousands of dollars back, and our deficit is ballooning. Now, today, it is reporting we are going to need another \$50 billion to keep the war fund going. We are already hundreds of billions of dollars into the war, and now we have Hurricane Katrina. Hindsight is 20-20, but you do not get into elective wars that bog you down because you just never know what is going to happen.

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We do not overextend ourselves, because we do not know when a Katrina is going to happen, when a national tragedy is going to happen. That is prudent leadership.

And now we are running budget deficits as far as the eye can see. We are borrowing the money from the Chinese and the Japanese. We are giving our country away, and we have got to pay interest on it. And one would think, and I hope, as the President is talking right now, that somewhere in his speech he has the guts to ask the

wealthiest people in the country to help us here because we need help.

I ask the President to take the leadership role that the American people have given him and have the guts to ask the wealthiest people in the Nation to help us rebuild the gulf coast, to help us fund this elective war that he got us into. We pay them back. They have got their tax cuts. We do not even have to take all of them back. We just need a few hundred billion dollars to pay for the war and to pay for Katrina. Have the guts to ask them for it. If they are in the health care industry, I am sure they are doing okay. If they are in the oil industry, I am sure they are doing just fine. Record profits as far as the eye can see in the oil industry. The greatest quarterly profits, billions and billions and billions of dollars for BP and a lot of these other folks. The big money people are doing okay. But those little kids on the covers of those magazines, those are the ones that we need to help. And to not have the courage to ask the wealthiest people in the country to help out, I think, is poor leadership.

So I think as much as we are talking about restructuring and trying to figure out what we are going to do and how we are going to make the government run more efficiently and how we are going to take care of FEMA and fix the problems that we have been talking about here the past few weeks, a component of that is what are we going to do with our budget deficit. Because, again, this was something we have been talking about with the 30-some-things for months and months and years even now. So I ask the President to please ask these people to contribute. They are the only ones doing really well in the country right now. Ask them to help out.

I am sure in the gentleman from Florida's (Mr. MEEK) district, as in my mine, people who do not have a lot of disposable income are the ones bringing the canned goods. And I am not saying that the wealthy people are not doing it. Of course they are. But right now our government needs funds, and we need the wealthiest in the country to contribute. And we have got to have a President that is willing to ask them to help out. And to see the disparity between those who have and those who do not highlighted through this whole tragedy, I think, really is a call for all of us in public office, especially those in high-ranking leadership positions, like the President, to make the proper request; and we need to ask those who have been doing very well to contribute to this fund.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, we have central time in the affected area, eastern time. I know that the President is going to be on 8 o'clock central, but he is going to be on at 9 o'clock eastern. But, obviously, he will be coming on very shortly. But I think it is important that it is not the words he is going to share with the American people tonight. It is

the action. We have to look at the action or the lack thereof that has been taken thus far.

Flying down, reviewing the devastation, talking to families, we have to go far beyond that. We have to make sure that Members of this Congress feel what we feel here on this floor tonight, having an opportunity to touch these individuals.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, this is a picture of, I may say, very fortunate individuals. This is a FEMA trailer down in Hancock County, Mississippi. I am standing there talking to one of the FEMA part-time workers. And there is a row of people actually behind us. There are maybe 10 phones in this trailer. But these individuals waited about 2 hours, and that is the short line, to get the assistance. They say that it should be 48 hours, 72 hours when it goes into their bank account. Many of these individuals, some of them returned back because they applied 3 days earlier and they still did not receive the assistance.

But I think it is important for us to realize, Mr. Speaker, that he mentioned the poll about putting an independent commission together. Because it is one thing to be able to say I will do my investigation and we will make sure that this never happens again and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is my good friend and I am going to make sure that he did what he was supposed to do. I do not think we are going to get down to the real truth about how we can avoid this from happening in the future, the governmental response, also making sure that the nonprofit agencies that we tie in with, that they did what they were supposed to do.

As it relates to the evacuation of poor people, there was a bill dropped down today on the Democratic side of the aisle that called for a response plan, an evacuation plan for the poor, for the elderly, for the individuals that need assistance the most, because what we saw in New Orleans, what we saw in Louisiana, what we saw in Mississippi, the individuals that were left behind were the individuals who did not know where their next \$5 was going to come from or were waiting on their check to come in or did not have a car to get out, and it is catastrophic.

So for us to be the last standing superpower, for us to have a President that we call the leader of the Free World, and for us to allow this to happen to Americans is shameful. That is not what I am saying. That is what weekly periodicals are saying. That is what the headlines on newspapers are saying. That is what everyday Americans are saying.

Some folks say it has a lot to do with the fact that people just did not listen to us. Well, there are a lot of people who did listen, and there are a lot of people that are somewhere else, at a cousin's house right now; but their homes are gone. Many of them did not even have insurance because their homes were paid for or they could not afford it.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line here tonight is that we cannot allow business as usual or "the establishment" to sweep this under the carpet. We are not saying that blood is on anyone's hands. We are not saying that. What we are saying is that we cannot afford for it to happen again. That is the bottom line.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, before we leave here tonight, we need to make sure that we give the e-mail address out. We need to make sure that Members know on both sides of the aisle that we have a responsibility to stand for these individuals. If somebody wants to do something, I think they need to help these individuals in the South. They need to help these individuals who do not have the means to come to Washington to organize themselves and ask for a government-sanctioned, funded independent commission to be able to make sure that someone's husband or wife does not run out of oxygen because the levees broke and because we could not reach them and that instead they sat in their homes for 3 days and perished.

On their memory, on behalf of them, make sure that does not happen again. Like in the charity hospital where 35 or 40 folks perished because the levees broke and we could not do anything, and we come to find out that those individuals did not even drown. They just expired. They did not get health care. The power ran out. The generator was out. All of this could have been avoided. All of this could have been avoided with the proper oversight and governance. So we need individuals that are professionals in this field to make sure that this never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, I will just go ahead and say for those individuals that felt that the resolution that we passed today was the best thing since sliced bread and they are on the plane on the way back to their districts or what have you, off for the weekend, that they did their part, now they go home and do what they have got to do in their district, that is fine. But I think they should have a conscience, a conscience on the fact that these individuals are not getting their just due, and they are not getting represented, and they are not getting what they deserve as Americans.

They are not refugees. They are Americans; and I will tell the Members right now, if we leave these individuals behind, if we leave these individuals behind, because I am going to tell the Members right now I do not think the American public will allow that to happen. I am going to be positive on this. When one is a leader and they say, okay, we thought we did something, maybe we need to revisit this thing one more time, I think that is important. And if one is in power to be able to make that happen, then so be it.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act never would have been if it were not for the people out in the streets making it happen. If it were not for black and white people of good-

will saying that somebody like me can have an opportunity to come to the Congress and give a Special Order to talk about the very individuals who cannot represent themselves; if it were not for those individuals, white and black, people in the North saying something is not right in the South and we are going to risk our lives to get the attention of the government that they pay taxes to allow them to have the kind of representation they deserve, this is far deeper than the resolution on the last day of a work week.

The last vote we take, and folks go home like it is another day at the office, I am sorry. If these individuals had the means to be able to make the political contributions, maybe they would get the attention of the majority of the House. I am talking about majority on both sides of the aisle. Maybe it would be different. But all they did was they voted for representation, and they salute the same flag that we salute every day here in this House, and they deserve the representation.

I am disturbed, Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed, by the fact they are partisan votes that are going on the other side of the Congress and in this House as though it is just another piece of legislation. It is something we disagree on. Americans have lost their lives. Americans are displaced. Children are displaced. People ran out of oxygen. Folks ran out of insulin. People are wrapped up on the side of the road, and bodies are still floating; and we leave on our way to a picnic like it is nothing.

Maybe all of us have made our contributions to the best 501(c)(3) or the relief effort that we wanted to. I know I have. But I will tell the Members this: it goes far beyond that. It goes far beyond that.

So I think the 30-something Working Group has to continue to do our part. We have to continue to do our part.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, he highlighted a point. This outfit that is in the executive branch right now, it is all politics. It is all politics all the time. It is not about policy. It is all about politics and trying to keep the Republicans in the majority. And I think when we see that five out of eight of the top appointments at FEMA are political hacks, I think when we look at passing a drug bill that does not have any cost controls for the drugs, does not allow for reimportation, all politics all the time. Weapons of mass destruction, go through all the war information we had before, all politics all the time. How do we sell this to the American people? Whether it is true or not, irrelevant. We need to go to war, and we are going to say whatever we have to say to get it done.

Now, as the gentleman mentioned earlier, talking about Davis-Bacon, Davis and Bacon were two Republican Members of Congress who passed a prevailing wage law that allows for when Federal money is being spent in a certain area that the Feds will pay the

prevailing wage of that area for the workers. Because if they are paying Federal money, then they should obviously be paying for whatever the going rate is in that area.

So what the President did was he repealed the prevailing wage provision, basically saying that we are not going to have any oversight over the contractors. We are going to send them billions of dollars. Halliburton is going to get their money. We are going to pay them whatever we have got to pay them, \$50 billion, \$100 billion without any oversight from a bipartisan commission here; and at the same time as we are not overseeing what the contractors are doing. We are going to repeal the basic provision that allows for workers to at least make a decent wage in that area.

And today in the Hill newspaper, these gentlemen from Americans for Tax Reform are saying that this repeal will make it obvious that Davis-Bacon is nothing but dead weight. So here these guys are wasting all of their time, all their energy on putting the screws to the workers, guys in New Orleans that are now living in Baton Rouge or in Mississippi or in Houston who want to go back home and help rebuild their community and make the going rate in their community, the prevailing wage in their community, and these guys are wasting all their time and energy trying to screw them to the wall instead of overlooking and seeing what Halliburton is doing.

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We are using the same administrative process with the reconstruction of Katrina as we have been using in the war, which wasted billions of dollars, no oversight of Halliburton, no oversight of all of these people who make tremendous contributions back to the President; and to have the audacity, with the great human tragedy that is there and the human suffering there, to say that you are going to waste your time and your energy making sure the workers do not get their fair share because that is dead weight, that is wasteful government spending.

These are the people who are going to go back and be able to actually do some work. It is tremendous. It is unbelievable. It is all politics all the time with these guys, and this is just one more component of that. They want to get rid of the unions, they want to get rid of prevailing wage. This one gentleman in here, he says something along the lines of it is a waste of money because the Federal money will go to the worker and if it is a union worker, the union worker will pay union dues per hourly wage. You have to be kidding me. These union workers pay like 5 cents an hour to go for the union dues, 10 cents an hour, it depends on what union you are in. But to say that this is somehow going to bankrupt the government by paying a gentleman or a woman the prevailing wage and, at the same time, billions and billions and

billions are getting wasted without any kind of oversight from a select committee in Congress is a joke, and I think it just keeps reinforcing "all politics all the time."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is 110 percent right. The gentleman from Ohio mentioned an issue about being nonpartisan and being, I would say, third-party validators, I just want to make sure we are clear. On the commission procedural vote here on this House floor that was voted down, for us to have this week, voted down for us to have a 9/11 kind of a commission, I believe that was today; and yesterday, there is an article, and I will give it to the Members just in case they were not watching the Senate, www.sfgate.com, there is an article: "Senate Kills Bid For Katrina Commission."

Now, let me tell my colleagues something. This is nothing that we did; this is something that the majority did. If they wanted to get to the bottom of it and to make sure that it never happens again and to make sure that Americans do not have to watch the horror, the horror of people dying and bodies floating, not because of Katrina, but because of lack of response, because the levee broke and because of a lack of administrative duties and governance on all levels; if we do not want that to happen again, why are we not passing a 9/11 kind of commission for the people in the gulf States?

They do not want to hear a speech. They do not need to hear, oh, we are going to do this, that, and the other. We are at war right now. We have men and women right now with sand in their teeth and bombs blowing up every day around them, away from their families, some have family in the affected area. I just want to give credit where credit is due; some of them had an opportunity to come back and check on their families. But let me just say, we have to go far beyond allowing business as usual.

I call on the Members and the American people again not to allow this to be swept under the carpet, not to allow individuals to sit up here and set the deck because these individuals are poor. We are better than that, and I know that we are going to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I want the gentleman from Ohio to give our e-mail address out. I know our hour is coming to a close. But I will tell my colleague, I am encouraged. I am encouraged because the American people, some 70 percent of them say they want an independent commission, and it is not a partisan issue. Those are Democrats and Republicans. I am encouraged that the democratic leader, the gentleman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is willing to stand in there against the wind for what the American people believe in and not allow business as usual. I am encouraged. I am encouraged by the fact that people are not only praying on behalf of these individuals, but the American people have taken action on behalf of

them, making sure that they have the things that they need. Throughout the country people are bringing people into their homes, paying rent for them as they are displaced at this particular time. I am encouraged. I am encouraged by the fact that these victims, many of them have praying grandmothers to make sure that they are even able to stand up and go through the trials and tribulations that they have gone through and they still go through. I am encouraged by that.

So, I say that every time that we have an opportunity to come to this floor and speak as free Americans in this democracy, we are going to give those individuals voice. I am glad that there is some leadership on this floor that sees the importance in that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am going to make a prediction. The hour is late, but I am going to make a prediction. The American people will not allow, will not allow the Republican Party to get away with having another white wash. They are not going to allow them to scrub this up and cover this up and clean it up without having proper oversight. Seventy percent of the people in this country want an independent commission to look at this, or a bipartisan commission to look at this. And I think until that happens, the Republican Party will continue to get pressure from the American people.

I think the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is going to stand strong. And, quite frankly, again, we should not appoint anybody to this commission. Eleven Republicans, nine Democrats, we do not have an ounce of power on this thing, and we will get slammed just like we do every day down here, and the end result will be a FEMA that continues to be inept and inadequate in its response to natural disasters.

So I say that the American people, that 70 percent of them who want this independent commission will not let this go, will not let the corruption and the cronyism continue. Mr. Speaker, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, send us an e-mail. We will be back here next week for a couple more nights and keep hammering away. We are not going to let go until we get the kind of commission that the American people want, that is only fair, and that will best fix the problems that we have in FEMA right now, because it will have proper oversight.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well said, I say to the gentleman. I thank my colleague for joining me in this (special order) this evening.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. COOPER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today after 2 p.m.

Mr. TANNER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a family funeral.

Mr. ISTOOK (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of observing relief operations from Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of illness.

Mr. PICKERING (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today after 12:30 p.m. on account of traveling to his district with the President of the United States to survey hurricane damage.

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of a family commitment.

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 Mr. DEFAZIO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

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

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mrs. MYRICK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. NORWOOD, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah, for 5 minutes, September 20 and 21.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, September 22.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, September 20, 21, and 22.

Mr. NUSSLE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GOHMERT, for 5 minutes, today.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi and to include extraneous material, notwithstanding the fact that it exceeds 2 pages of the RECORD and is estimated by the Public Printer to cost \$3,034.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 276—An act to revise the boundary of the Wind Cave National Park in the State of South Dakota.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 37 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the

House adjourned until Monday, September 19, 2005, at noon.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

3909. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Migratory Bird Hunting; Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations on Certain Federal Indian Reservations and Ceded Lands for the 2005-06 Early Season (RIN: 1018-AT76) received September 2, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3910. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Migratory Bird Hunting; Early Seasons and Bag and Possession Limits for Certain Migratory Game Birds in the Contiguous United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (RIN: 1018-AT76) received September 2, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3911. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Migratory Bird Hunting; Final Frameworks for Early-Season Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations (RIN: 1018-AT76) received September 2, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3912. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for the California Tiger Salamander, Central Population (RIN: 1018-AT68) received August 12, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3913. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management, OSM, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Pennsylvania Regulatory Program [PA-124-FOR] received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3914. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Final Designation of Critical Habitat for Four Vernal Pool Crustaceans and Eleven Vernal Pool Plants in California and Southern Oregon; Evaluation of Economic Exclusions From August 2003 Final Designation (RIN: 1018-AU06) received August 12, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3915. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Listing Roswell springsnail, Koster's springsnail, Noel's amphipod, and Pecos assimineae as Endangered with Critical Habitat (RIN: 1018-AI15) received August 12, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

3916. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zones; Monterey Bay and Humboldt Bay, CA. [COTP San Francisco Bay 04-003] (RI: 1625-AA87) received September 8, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3917. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Special Local Regulations for Marine Events; Atlantic Ocean, Atlantic City, NJ [CGD05-05-072] (RIN: 1625-AA08) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3918. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Regulated Navigation Area; Humboldt Bay Bar Channel and Humboldt Bay Entrance Channel, Humboldt Bay, CA [CGD11-05-006] (RIN: 1625-AA11) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3919. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Regulated Navigation Area, Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, Romeoville, IL [CGD09-05-102] (RIN: 1625-AA11) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3920. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Mississippi River, Rock Island, IL [CGD08-05-025] (RIN: 1625-AA9) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3921. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulations; Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, South Branch of the Elizabeth River, Chesapeake, VA [CGD05-05-041] (RIN: 1625-AA09) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3922. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Skidaway Bridge (SR 204), Intracoastal Waterway, mile 592.9, Savannah, Chatham County, GA [CGD07-04-124] (RIN: 1625-AA09) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3923. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zone; San Francisco Bay, Oakland Estuary, Alameda, CA [COTP San Francisco Bay 05-006] (RIN: 1625-AA87) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3924. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zone; Protection of Military Cargo, Captain of the Port Zone Puget Sound, WA [CGD13-05-031] (RIN: 1625-AA87) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3925. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Massalina Bayou, Panama City, FL [CGD08-05-040] (RIN: 1625-AA09) received September 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

3926. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department