

and dedicated to finding the cowards who continue to attack democracy and take the lives of innocent civilians. As co-chair of the Victory in Iraq Caucus, I am extremely proud of their success. By capturing and killing terrorists in Iraq, our troops are protecting American families from terrorists who threaten our freedoms and our way of life.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Violence Against Women Act has made a great difference for countless women and their families when confronting violence, and VAWA has made a significant difference in the health and happiness of hundreds of thousands of women, children and families.

With one in four women in this country experiencing domestic violence, clearly much more remains to be done. So we cannot abandon our commitment to them and to the women around the world.

Women have every right to feel safe in their own homes. They also deserve to know that law enforcement and health officials are equipped to deal with their special needs in these tragic situations, and we must include teaching young people that bullying and violence must be avoided. We must teach them how to handle situations of conflict and anger in other ways besides bullying and violence.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the reauthorization of VAWA to ensure these protections and make sure that resources are available.

HONORING DR. DAVID BUSHMAN

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, September 30, 2005, is a significant day in American higher education. This day marks Dr. David W. Bushman's inauguration as the 13th president of Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

Lees-McRae College is an institution of which the entire Nation can be proud. For 105 years, it has prepared young men and women to take their places as productive citizens. Committed to leadership and service, Lees-McRae is an integral part of the larger community, putting into practice its historic motto, "In the mountains, for the mountains."

David W. Bushman is an outstanding scholar, educator and administrator. Under his leadership, Lees-McRae College reaffirms its commitment to academic excellence in the liberal arts tradition and to the moral and civic education of its students.

As David Bushman assumes the presidency of Lees-McRae College, I extend

sincere congratulations to him and to the college. As President Bushman and Lees-McRae College begin this new chapter in their history, they do so with my best wishes for continued success.

REPUBLICANS FAKING THEIR WAY THROUGH INQUIRY

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday House Republicans convened their partisan investigation into what went wrong in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. It is clear Republicans want to fix all blame on the back of former FEMA director Michael Brown.

Republicans were willing to ask tough questions yesterday, but that is simply not enough. For 5 years now, House Republicans have ignored their oversight responsibilities of the Bush administration. Are we now supposed to believe that House Republicans will conduct an investigation that will not only determine what exactly went wrong but also how we can prevent such a slow response from ever happening again?

The New York Times said that Washington is faking a Katrina inquiry. The paper determined that a government dominated by one party should be disqualified from investigating itself. Democrats here in the House strongly agree.

We simply will not be a part of a sham investigation. The American people want real answers, not a cover-up. An overwhelming 87 percent of Americans are demanding an independent commission similar to the 9/11 Commission.

MEDICARE D

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of a new Medicare part D prescription drug benefit that is available to all seniors beginning January 1, 2006.

This week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid released information on organizations offering prescription drug plans in each of our 50 States, and the opportunity for sign-up begins November 15.

This announcement holds great news for seniors across America. In every State, seniors will have a choice among plan providers. In my home State of Georgia, for example, seniors will be able to choose from 18 different plans, ensuring they can find one that best suits their individual needs.

Mr. Speaker, there is more good news for our seniors. Not only will they be eligible for prescription drug coverage from a range of organizations, but they will receive this benefit for less money than previously expected, in some

cases, for a premium as low as \$20 a month. This is the power of competition, and our seniors will benefit from it. We do not need government price controls. The free market works.

Mr. Speaker, for years, our seniors have struggled with the rising cost of prescription drugs, in some cases going without medicine they need to stay healthy. With Medicare part D, seniors will be able to reap the benefits of preventive care and live longer, healthier lives.

RECOVERY FROM HURRICANES

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues this morning to begin to look at the recovery of Hurricane Katrina, and support thereof to include Hurricane Rita. Just spending 4 days in the region, a number of them at the Transtar Hurricane Emergency Center day and night, I can tell my colleagues that the frustration that is reflected in the Houston Chronicle, FEMA faulted yet again, and of course, that in The Washington Post, evacuees urged to stay away, is only a limited story of what we have faced in that region.

Going into the region directly hit just yesterday, I can tell my colleagues, as the local officials wanted me to say, there is no food, there is no water, there is no ice. They need help—they need leadership from the Federal Government. There are trucks parked on hotel parking lots that cannot be opened to share food because the military has not yet been directed to arrive to unload the trucks.

This is not a finger pointed in the direction of local officials. It is a finger pointed with a singular question: Who is in charge? When you are ordered to evacuate and there is no order, who is in charge?

An independent inquiry, a widespread understanding of how we can secure the homeland is absolutely imperative.

OPERATION OFFSET

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Katrina breaks my heart. When I consider the tragic aftermath of this extraordinary storm, now 1 month hence, I cannot help but think of that person in the Bible who speaks of how the rains came down, the winds blew and beat against the house, the floodwaters rose, and the house fell with a great crash.

Congress is now involved in a critical debate about relief and rebuilding and how we will pay for what could be hundreds of billions of dollars in recovery and reconstruction of the gulf coast.

Last week, House conservatives offered their own plan, a series of budget

cuts simply known as Operation Offset. It contained many good ideas, and it seems to have engendered, Mr. Speaker, an important debate here in Washington, DC, and all around the country.

It seems that Members of Congress know and the American people know that raising taxes or raising the national debt is no way for this national government to respond to the extraordinary costs of Katrina. We must ensure that a catastrophe of nature does not become a catastrophe of debt for our children and grandchildren through introducing tough budget cuts like Operation Offset.

□ 1030

CALLING FOR EXTENSION OF MILC PROGRAM

(Mr. OBEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, last year in the conference on the disaster supplemental, Senate conferees passed a provision extending the MILC program for 2 years, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD) and I had lined up enough votes on the House side to accept that amendment. To prevent that from happening, the Republican chairman of the conference gavled the meeting to a close, and we never met again on the subject. Despite the fact that the President had said in my hometown on that same day that he favored the extension of the MILC program, when my office called the White House asking him to intervene in order to get that conference reopened so that the MILC program could be extended, the White House declined.

That program is now scheduled to expire at the end of this week. If that happens, we will have lost an important safety net for Wisconsin's dairy farmers. I urge the House agriculture authorizing committee to immediately report out to this floor an action extending the MILC program so that we do not lose that vital program, and I urge the Republican leadership of the House to see to it that the committee does just that.

CALLING FOR INDEPENDENT COMMISSION REGARDING HURRICANE KATRINA

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I watched the testimony of former FEMA Director Michael Brown yesterday. By any measure, it was a shameful and disgraceful performance. More disgraceful is the revelation that after being appointed to a position for which he was completely unqualified, after doing a horrific disservice to his fellow citizens in Louisiana and Mississippi,

after embarrassing our country in the eyes of the world, he is still on the payroll of FEMA.

But after hearing Michael Brown's hearing yesterday, the need for an independent commission is even more glaringly obvious. The American people are demanding it. And why are they demanding it? Because we have seen that the Department of Homeland Security is fundamentally flawed. It is not working, and we need to know why and we need to know what to do to fix it. Just the scale of the disaster alone, it is important to never repeat that again in our country. The amount of money alone justifies that we do an independent investigation. \$200 billion of our taxpayers' money is going down South, and we have no idea what it is being used for or how it is being spent. And the issue of cronyism needs to be explored. Eighty percent of the contracts for Katrina and Rita are nonbid contracts for no reason. Let us not be shamed as we were to the 9/11 Commission. Let us make this independent commission a reality now.

FINDING A WAY TO PAY FOR HURRICANE DAMAGE

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Ben Bernanke said: "Every effort needs to be made to try and offset the cost of Katrina and Rita by reductions in other government programs." He suggested following through with eliminating or severely cutting 154 health care, education, and infrastructure priorities as proposed in the President's budget in order to meet his goal of cutting the deficit in half in 5 years.

What would these cuts entail? A \$4.3 billion cut from the Education Department's budget and \$2 billion from the Health and Human Services budget, just to name a few.

But what did Mr. Bernanke not suggest might help this President reach his deficit reduction goals? Any hint of rolling back tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans who earn over \$400,000 or scaling back the estate tax cut which has no impact on 98 percent of American families?

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we find ways to pay for the hurricane damage, but we cannot afford to hold sacred the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the values, priorities, or needs of middle-class Americans. They deserve better.

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE ON H.R. 2360, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1 of rule XXII, and by direction of the Committee on Appropriations, I move to

take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 2360) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS).

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. SABO

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

MOTION TO INSTRUCT HOUSE CONFEREES H.R. 2360, FY2006 HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS BILL OFFERED BY MR. SABO

Mr. Sabo moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the bill, H.R. 2360, be instructed to insist on the headings and appropriation accounts in Title III of the House-passed bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under rule XXII, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO).

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

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Katrina shined a bright spotlight on troubling gaps in our Nation's homeland security. We all saw what it means to be unprepared: people die and suffer needlessly.

Americans are patiently waiting for competence and accountability from the Congress and the President. Our capacity to deal with catastrophe may actually have gotten worse since the Department of Homeland Security was created in 2003. The people demand that we fix what is broken.

Last week, Secretary Chertoff told me about his vision for improving national preparedness and response. What he said scares the living daylights out of me. In the Department's sixth reorganization plan in 2½ years, the Secretary proposes to sever the last ties between Federal disaster preparedness and response. He unveiled this proposal in July, before Katrina; and he is still determined to implement it on October 1.

With all due respect, the Secretary is dead wrong about what is most needed at the Federal level to coordinate and lead local, State, and Federal agencies in preparing for and responding to a major disaster, whether it is natural or man-made. If we have learned one thing in the past month, it should be that disaster preparedness and response must go hand in hand. Not long ago, FEMA did that well. The agency was robust, proactive and proved how good planning and coordination are critical to effective response. Congress should demand a pause before Secretary Chertoff implements more organizational changes that will further