

match them up with the active duty forces and have them in the present combat situation in Iraq and in Afghanistan, have the Reserve and Guard forces working side-by-side with the active duty forces to the point in which they cannot be distinguished, one from the other is, to a large degree, a function of General Myers' leadership.

So he leaves us with his last appearance before the House Committee on Armed Services today, and he is going to enjoy hopefully a little free time with his wonderful wife, Mary Jo. I know that we will be calling on him to give us his great judgment in the future, because he is a great American with lots of integrity, lots of respect from all sides of the aisle on Capitol Hill in both bodies, and also a great deal of respect from those people that work and serve this country every day, wearing the uniform of the United States. We are going to call on General Richard B. Myers many times. A wonderful, wonderful American.

Now, I would also like to talk very briefly about another great American, and an American family. I was reminded about this family when General John Kelly came in and we discussed some of the challenges that we are facing in Iraq. He is the liaison for the United States Marine Corps on Capitol Hill.

I thought about that family, that Kelly family as he walked out the door, and about the fact that while General Kelly was the Deputy Commander of the First Marine Division, and a very tough conflict and contest in Fallujah, in the western area of operations in Iraq, one of the most volatile and one which is very, very dangerous. While he was the Deputy Commander of the First Marine Division, his son John was a communications officer, also a United States marine in country, and his other son Robert was a rifleman, a member of a marine fire team, an enlisted marine who was, in fact, on the ground floor going house-to-house, street-to-street, and carrying out the mandates of the leadership of the First Marine Division in which his dad was the Deputy Division Commander. What a great American family. What a tradition this Kelly family has manifested. Of course, General Kelly has a wonderful daughter, Kathleen Kelly, who has spent a lot of time in places like Bethesda Hospital, comforting wounded marines and letting them know that Americans care about them.

That is the tradition of this country, and it is one that the Kelly family has done a lot to promote and to extend, and our great thanks to them for what they have done.

Also, Mr. Speaker, today I wanted to mention two wonderful leaders in my community who have passed on very recently. I have discussed before Jim Kuhn, who is a great, wonderful guy from the Imperial Valley, the guy who started the Salton Sea International Bird Festival. We are down there in Imperial Valley, we are very close to, and

in fact, touch the Mexican border; we have an immense inland sea that is full of salt water, the Salton Sea. Jim Kuhn was a farmer who was a stand-out citizen who started in football and wrestling and went to Stanford, but came back to his beloved Imperial Valley and became one of the leading farmers, one of the leading innovators, a guy who was very creative in his area of agriculture, but also a guy with a great heart for the community. He founded this International Bird Festival which has brought people from all over the world to the banks of the Salton Sea there in Imperial Valley, California.

Jim died, as I noted earlier, very tragically in an automobile accident. He leaves a wonderful wife Heidi and the children, Vienna and Fritz, to carry on his legacy, and I know that they will.

Another dear friend and a great leader in California passed away, and we had services for him yesterday, and that was Corky McMillan. Corky McMillan was a guy who started his business with a pickup truck and a few carpenter's tools and rose from that and I might say is a guy who built much of San Diego, built a career and built a community in San Diego from those humble beginnings to become San Diego's finest homebuilder, one of the finest homebuilders in the Nation, and a person who literally built communities, not only in San Diego, but also in other parts of California and in other States.

Corky McMillan was a guy with a great heart. He was a guy who did lots of stuff for the community and was centered on his family. His family, Scott and Mark and Lauri and, of course, his beloved wife Bonnie were everything to Corky.

He became one of the great off-road racers in southern California. Those are the people that go down into Baja, California, with machines that go over holes in the ground that are 2 and 3 feet deep over ravines, literally taking those vehicles, those desert vehicles over them in a surreal manner, sometimes at speeds far exceeding 100 miles an hour, and manage to survive all of that. It is a rare breed of people. It started out with guys like Parnelli Jones, and has become a very high-tech sport, and it is one in which Corky McMillan and his sons Scott and Mark excelled and elevated to a level in which it is appreciated by people throughout the world.

Corky McMillan was a wonderful guy who gave a lot to his community and a lot to his country and a lot to the sport of racing, and we are going to miss Corky McMillan.

So I thank my colleagues for letting me reflect on some transitions today and talk about some Americans who truly deserve to be well remembered.

DISCUSSING THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMAN of New York). 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 the opportunity to address my colleagues tonight and address this House of Representatives. As I sat and listened to the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), I cannot resist the sense of duty and obligation to weigh in on some of his remarks that he made with regard to General Myers as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Of course, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has worked very closely with General Myers and he knows him far better than I do. My work in relationship there has been not as deep, but I have been as impressed as the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has been with Richard Myers, the chairman of our Joint Chiefs, and with his vision and his ability to see beyond the horizon, as the gentleman said.

I also had the privilege of meeting General John Kelly over in Iraq before the operation that ended the battle of Fallujah, and I was impressed with his dedication and his vision and his understanding of who our enemy was and what needed to be done, and I was pleased to sit here tonight and hear the remarks made by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), honoring the family, the family commitment to the military and to the defense of this fine Nation that was made by General John Kelly and his children.

Mr. Speaker, let me shift to the subject matter that I asked to speak about tonight and that is the subject matter that I have come to call "Katritia." We have been here on this floor a couple of hours in the past 2 weeks, and I have spoken at great length about Katrina and, in these past few days, we have seen the aftermath now of Hurricane Rita. I just merge them together, because essentially they did merge together, Mr. Speaker, as Katrina hit New Orleans and points on the east and Rita hit points to the west of New Orleans on over into the bay and into Texas, so they have crossed those lines and the damage of the two hurricanes have overlapped on each other.

When I take Katrina on the one side and Rita on the other side and merge them together I get Katritia. It is the largest natural disaster I believe that this Nation has ever seen. We are fortunate that it has not been the largest loss of life, although we mourn those who we have lost, and we are still in the process of recovery. But this financial loss and the term of time that will be required for reconstruction I think is the most devastating that America has seen. We are going to need to pull together on this.

I am well aware that there are Members of Congress who have districts

that were hit hard by the dual hurricanes, and they are the most sensitive to these issues. I am up in the upper Midwest, although I have made my trip down there and much of my staff has been down there, and in fact, I have a staff person there today who will be there for some time. We want to lend a good hand to the people in the gulf coast intelligently and responsibly.

Before I get into that in any great depth, I will be happy to yield the floor to one of those individuals who does have constituents in the area, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

□ 1845

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) for yielding and for hosting this hour to discuss these important issues.

When the two ladies of the gulf came in to Southeast Texas and southwestern Louisiana just in the last few weeks, in some respect the whole area and our attitude about natural disasters changed. As you mentioned, this is not the greatest loss of life regarding hurricanes. In fact, the greatest disaster that occurred in American history occurred in the year 1900 when "the storm" as it was called came across Galveston, Texas, that island, and killed at least 8,000 people, maybe even 12,000 people.

Times have changed a great deal because we now follow those hurricanes as our weather forecasters did with the two ladies of the gulf, Katrina, and more recently, Rita.

As you know, the folks in Louisiana disbursed throughout the United States but many, probably most came to Texas. And Texas is on the other side of the Sabine River, and many of those people stopped off in my congressional district in Beaumont. Even this past week before Rita hit, there was still 15,000 people from Louisiana in Jefferson County where Beaumont, Texas is. Many of them went on further to Houston which is about 90 miles away.

The good folks in Texas and other parts of the country have tried to take care of those displaced citizens the best they can. Just last week, almost a week ago Hurricane Rita came down hurricane alley and hit us in Jefferson County and Liberty County and Harris County, three counties that I represent or portions of these three counties.

We did some good things. I say "we," the government officials, local officials, Federal officials, and the community did some good things before Hurricane Rita came ashore. Of course, they were aware of the fact that there was a hurricane coming so there was an evacuation plan implemented. There was an expectation that about a million people would evacuate southeast Texas and move further west into other parts of Texas, but the truth of the matter was there was over 2½ million people evacuated.

By any imagination this would have been a large scale military operation in

time of war. Moving 2½ million people logistically is a massive undertaking. The mayor of the City of Houston, Bill White, and the county judge, which is our county president, Robert Eccles, did a tremendous job moving people and evacuating people. And so, those people are coming back into southeast Texas as we speak.

The counties that I represent, Jefferson County, is still without power tonight. It has been almost a week. Still without water. It has been almost a week. The same is true in parts of Liberty County. As you know, in southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana from New Orleans to Corpus Christie, Texas, 60 percent of the Nation's gasoline is refined in that one area. In Port Arthur, Texas, which was hit by Hurricane Rita, 27 percent of the gasoline is refined in that one small community for the whole United States. And because of the Katrina and Rita, several of these refineries have had to shut down. Many of those refineries have never shut down since the day they opened some 20, 25 years ago. Those refineries invented the phrase of working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, many years ago. It takes several days to get these refineries up and running once again.

I will mention something about the refineries momentarily. But for the most part, there was no damage to these refineries that cannot be repaired in just a few days, but they are missing a power source to start up again.

The county of Jefferson County, Beaumont and Port Arthur, evacuated about 90 percent of the people who lived there. Most of them are still displaced in parts of Texas, I think some of them have gone to Iowa and looking at Iowa for the first time in their lives. They, of course, want to come home.

The situation there now after a week, local officials are there trying to maintain, of course, some order. For the most part there has been very little looting, and our first responders are spending 12 hours a day working in shifts. The biggest problem our first responders have is that they are sleeping in their police cars. Of course, they have no electricity. They have no air conditioning and they are doing a marvelous job. It is interesting to note that not one member of the Beaumont Police Department left town during Hurricane Rita.

Something remarkable occurred and I think it is worthy to note that the port of Beaumont ships most of the military cargo to Iraq and Afghanistan. Docked in the Port of Beaumont at the time of the hurricane was the Cape Victory and the Cape Vincent, two cargo ships that transport military cargo to Iraq and Afghanistan.

They were all expecting a surge of water to not only take over Port Arthur but further north, Beaumont as well. So the mayor and the first responders were concerned about their vehicles, what to do with them because

they were doing to need them as soon as the hurricane was over. So the two captains of the Cape Victory and the Cape Vincent and the mayor, Mayor Guy Goodson, came up with the idea to put all of these vehicles on the two cargo ships. One does not think of seeking safety on a ship during a hurricane, but that is exactly what happened.

So they, in just a few minutes, made the decision and started within an hour without any red tape, without any permission, without any bureaucracy, without any committee meetings, just loading those two ships with police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, fire equipment, front-end loaders, police helicopters and dump trucks from several surrounding towns. Tug boats went into operation during the hurricane to secure the ships, and as soon as the hurricane passed by those vehicles were ready to be used and they are being used and they were all taken care of in a very safe manner.

We are thankful to these two salty sea captains for coming up with that idea and protecting the first responders there.

I do want to thank the President for coming down to my district and viewing the situation firsthand. He did so in Louisiana, came into Texas. He had a meeting with the local officials and the first responders. And then he flew over the entire area in a helicopter to see southeast Texas and of course Louisiana as well.

The need for American petroleum and natural gas and dependence on ourselves could not be more evident in this hurricane, in these last two hurricanes.

We in this country for various reasons have not built a new refineries since over 25 years ago. It is not economically profitable to do so so there has not been any. We are now 60 percent dependent on foreign crude oil in the United States, and every day we take more and more away from our own selves and we have to import crude oil to make sure that the American public has gasoline.

These two disasters are evident that we need to do something about being energy self-sufficient. Most of our refineries are in southeast Texas, southwest Louisiana. Most of the offshore rigs are in the gulf in the same area. That is why it is important in my opinion that we drill in other parts offshore, not just off the coasts of Louisiana and Texas but even further east, even off the coast of Florida, the East Coast and West Coast as well. We are the only major power in the world that has the policy of not drilling off our own shores.

People complain and are concerned, and that is rightfully so about the price of gasoline, certainly they should be, and we have to find a place to refine that crude oil and we also must find a way to produce crude oil as well.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would pose a question to the gentleman, as the gentleman raised the issue with the natural gas and oil drilling that goes on in the gulf, I have seen the map of where those rigs are, the platforms that are out there, and what I cannot see when I go down there along that shore and what I cannot see when I go along there and in a plane or a helicopter is any rigs. Can you see the rigs from the shoreline, say if you are sitting on the beach anywhere down there?

Mr. POE. Well, of course they are not on a beach and the only way you could ever see is them on a clear night you could sometimes see the lights from the rigs that are offshore; but generally speaking, in the daytime you cannot see them at all.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I would pose a follow-up question. Does the gentleman have any idea why it is some folks oppose the drilling offshore when it is out of sight?

Mr. POE. I do not understand why. I think, in my own opinion, there is a certain fear and panic about offshore drilling that is unfounded. Those folks that can drill offshore today can do it in a very environmentally clean manner. The best example is probably using the North Sea. The roughest seas in the world are in the North Sea. And the North Sea has numerous offshore rigs. Most of them built by, of course, Texans, and they can do so in a safe manner.

We can drill offshore in a safe manner. We can drill in an environmentally safe manner. No one wants polluted air or water. I think the day has come now where we have to get rid of the unnecessary and abusive regulations so we can drill offshore. It will not only bring us natural gas, crude oil for gasoline, but it will bring an income to the American public, because when the Federal Government leases offshore, oil companies pay for those leases.

And some estimate that the American Treasury could receive up to \$7 billion a year by leasing in those areas where we have not leased before.

So it is a decision that the American public is going to have to make, depending on foreign gas, natural gas, depending on foreign crude oil or drill offshore; and I think we should drill in numerous places. And it is a security issue because as you know when those hurricanes get in the gulf, they have to go somewhere. And we got all those rigs in one place, the refineries in one place as we have seen, it could have been a whole lot worse and the country could be in a whole lot worse shape just because of the energy and the lack of offshore drilling.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the last oil spill we had in any offshore drilling for oil was 1969. I do not know if the gentleman can confirm that, but in that question could the gentleman also respond to the question of, does the gentleman know if there has ever been a spill of natural

gas drilling offshore? And if it did spill, would it kind of look like the gas that is boiling up out of the water in New Orleans where it would just dissipate into the air and is there a reason to be concerned, even if we were irresponsible with regard to natural gas drilling?

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, as far as I know there has not been any major problems. We know we have had these two hurricanes and with very little environmental impact with the offshore rigs. The refineries are built very, very well. The refineries knew that the hurricanes were coming. They started burning the fuel that was in the pipe so there would not be any pipe disasters.

Just to mention as a side note, one-third of the pipelines in the United States go right through my congressional district. They go to all parts of the United States, but one-third are through that congressional district. It is all very highly concentrated, but we can proceed with a safe energy policy. And like I said, the American public has to make that decision, and I hope they make the right decision which would be that we become more self-sufficient on energy.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for coming to the floor to stand up and let America and the Speaker know the circumstances in southern Texas and how that has impacted you all down there. I will pick up on the flow of this.

I had the privilege of going down there very early. In fact, my district director was on the ground near New Orleans on an air base on Labor Day which was just barely in the aftermath of the hurricane. It was important, I thought, to have someone down there to see what was going on so we could measure the magnitude of the disaster down.

He went down with a KC-135 load of Air Force MP's out of Colorado and reported back to me immediately. From what he saw down there, he said he thought there was so much military activity on Labor Day that it reminded him of the DaNang base during Vietnam when he was there.

So that gave me a sense of how much military effort there was even that early, and yet the public does not have the perception that there was a Federal response that was nearly as aggressive or as comprehensive as it actually was.

I would say further that I did not wait. The following week I was there on the eleventh and twelfth of September. I came in very early on that Sunday morning. I got a good look at much of what was going on and went up in a Black Hawk helicopter and flew all over New Orleans for a couple of hours. I went back down and had the meetings that I had asked for. I was given a ride over the Corps of Engineers headquarters.

□ 1900

There I entered their administrative offices where they rode out Hurricane

Katrina, and looking at the drawings that they had and the maps of the area, and I had studied the elevations and the levees and the system that had been constructed. I had also read the reports that were predicting the worst-case scenario, which essentially Katrina was the worst-case scenario for New Orleans with the exception that maybe the winds could have been a little stronger, but it went in the most damaging path it could have. It was almost the perfect storm, and I will return to that description perhaps in a few moments, Mr. Speaker.

But when I think of the immediate military response that kept the air bases looking like Danang with so many planes landing, we had fixed-wing aircraft landing more often than one every minute, whether it be C-130s or KC-135s, cargo aircraft coming in with manpower and also with supplies, equipment, everything they could imagine that they could muster up from our military. Those fixed wing aircraft were landing on the runway. The military had set up their power system, and they had taken over the communications for the air traffic controllers which did not have power.

So the military system kicked in, and they were controlling the fixed-wing aircraft to land one more often than every minute on the runway there. Then, on top of that, the helicopters were coming and going; and they were landing crossways of the runway, asked to yield the right-of-way to the planes that were landing, a very, very busy place on Labor Day that early after Katrina hit.

So I would just fast forward to, in fact, exactly 7 days later when I found myself in a shelter in Slidell, Louisiana, visiting some of the people who had been evacuees from their homes and were looking for a place to lay their weary heads. They had set up the gymnasium there with perhaps 300 cots, a Red Cross-structured shelter. As I walked through there and visited some of the victims of the storm, I got a sense of the stories that they had lived through and a feel for the way they had been helped out and the helping hands that came from volunteers from all across this country, and in fact, hearing the stories of the traffic that was going south, while the evacuation was going north, people coming to help were a traffic jam themselves.

That is the American spirit, Mr. Speaker; and in that gymnasium, I met a young man who was a specialist with the 711th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama. He was Specialist Cunningham, and I asked him, of course, what unit he was with. He said, 711th Signal out of Mobile, Alabama, sir. I said, how did you get here out of Alabama? Didn't you get hit by a hurricane there, too? He said, Yes, but our orders were to come over here and help the people that needed it worse than we did. I said how did you get across Mississippi? His answer was, We used chainsaws and we used Humvees and

chainsaws, and we essentially cut away across the trees that were down over the highway, and we dug them out of the way and we opened the road and worked our way over here. So they had cut all the way or worked their way and cleared some of the way, if not all the way, across Mississippi to Slidell, Louisiana, on the eastern side of the Louisiana border, right next to the Mississippi line.

People from Mobile, Alabama, 300 strong, in there early, and they started out on Monday. That is Monday Labor Day, the same day my district director landed down there near New Orleans, the same day that the air traffic was landing, one plane more often than every minute, with helicopters landing in between, bringing manpower and machines and equipment and supplies in for people that were in need.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government did provide a fast response; but it was a huge area, 90,000 square miles to start with; and now it has been added to significantly by Rita. Of course, we learned from Katrina; and some of the things that were in place in Texas in preparation for evacuees, particularly those that might come out of Galveston in the event of a hurricane, were very beneficial to the people that came from New Orleans and found themselves in Houston.

I am quite impressed with the effort of the region and the resources that they pulled together and the ability that they had in the Astrodome to have supplies there and water and food and medicine. I think the report was 400 different kinds of pharmaceuticals in a pharmaceutical shop that was set up there along with cots and all the services that they needed, medical help and psychological help, and the list went on. Plenty of volunteers were able to take thousands of people into the Astrodome and have the supplies there so that it was orderly, clean, and neat. It was not littered.

Apparently, the people who went to the Astrodome helped clean the place up. I do not know, but every time I saw a picture of that, it was a clean place; and whenever I saw a picture of the Superdome, it was a very, very filthy and littered place that appeared to have no order, and it was a chaotic location, as we all pretty well know by now.

As the Committee on Government Reform meets and holds hearings and examines the circumstances that unfolded, I really do think that we need to let them do their due diligence. I think we need to let them listen to the testimony, and we heard the now-just-resigned director of FEMA give his testimony yesterday. More testimony followed today, I understand. It will follow in the days and weeks ahead.

It is important that we put on record the chronology of what happened when, where was the storm in the path, what notices went out, what decisions were made at what time, who was in the position of authority, and at what time did they make those decisions, who did

they consult with, what was the basis of the facts of the information, what equipment did they have to work with, what alternatives did they have, what had they done in the past history to prepare themselves for such a disaster.

Certainly, it was not a surprise that a hurricane might someday hit of that magnitude, because that was published in the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper, I believe it was in late 2002.

I have read all those articles, and I have read the worst-case scenario, and I cannot believe that I would be one of the few people, but many, many people in that region were aware of the worst-case scenario, and that is essentially what transpired.

I think it is important to let the committee do their work, the Committee on Government Reform, bring the witnesses forward, put their testimony on the record, take the documents, the supporting documents, and put those into the record and have the staff and the interested people and the public and the media be able to take a good look and examine the facts and then write up the scenarios.

This committee will issue a report, and I want to reserve my judgment on all the things that I think went wrong until such time as I can point to them and say these are congressional findings, they are facts; and I want to base my judgment off of those facts.

I will give, Mr. Speaker, a couple of opinions on what I think happened, and not to be passing previous judgment but simply to give an overall sketch of how it looks to me from what I have seen, what I have been involved in, and that is, that I think Hurricane Katrina, and Rita to a significantly less effect, but Katrina particularly was almost the perfect storm.

It did what the director of Homeland Security said here on this floor, that it came in in a military fashion. If you were going to attack a city and you wanted to immobilize a city, what you would do is wipe out the communications, the power and electricity. That is the first thing that Katrina did. Then you would cut off all the transportation routes into the city, and that is what happened with the flooding and the roads that were taken out. Then the third thing that would happen would be, of course, you would attack, and that was the flood. The flood, when you start filling up a city like that, it immobilizes everything. It put everybody out of commission.

So it was almost a perfect storm from the standpoint of the damage that it did and the direction that it took.

I can speak about that perhaps a little bit more, Mr. Speaker; but I would add to that then, when local services disappeared and when we saw that many hundreds of the first responders were victims of the storm themselves, either their places were damaged by the wind, damaged by the water, under water, or damaged by the wind and the water and under water, but the first responders took a serious blow, and they

were not there to help coordinate. They did not have a communications system to help coordinate with. I am sure that there are many, many stories of heroic people that toiled in oblivion in that chaos of the first few days that was the effect of the storm that hit New Orleans.

I will say that that rolling chain reaction of disaster, the effect of the city's response in particular was not as effective as it may have been due to lack of communications ability, due to lack of resources in places where one would think they might have been, and then the loss of communications so that it was not possible to salvage the operations, salvage the response to the storm because the resources were not there, had there been the right decisions made, I think to provide them. So you take it up to the next level of the State, and there, again, communications and decision-making are certainly something that will be questioned.

It kept the decisions out of the hands of the Federal Government, except for those National Guards like 711th Signal Battalion out of Mobile, Alabama, who came in and under whose order I do not know, but I am awfully glad they came. I was awfully proud to look at young Specialist Cunningham in the eye when he told me that they had chainsawed their way across Mississippi to get to Louisiana.

That is the American way, Mr. Speaker, and when I hear the anecdote that was told by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) a few moments ago about the decision to place the vehicles on a couple of ships and keep them safe from the hurricane, and that offer was made by a couple of captains, he said that they made the decision in just a few minutes to place vehicles on a ship. They did that right away, and they protected all of those vehicles, they were in good condition, good shape, because a decision was made at the local level. Quick-thinking people that looked around and saw the resources that they had, that has always been the American way.

When we let government make decisions, we delay. For government to make decisions, the bureaucracy moves too slowly, the information moving up to the bureaucracy gets there too slowly; and even if the right decision is made, chances are it does not get back down through and does not get implemented in time for it to have the effect that it might have.

You really need people on the ground that are thinking for themselves and have enough self-confidence, enough leadership ability and enough authority to make those decisions like that decision was that recommended by the two ships' captains that saved all those vehicles, so that as soon as the storm was over, they could roll them off the ships and put them right to work rescuing people.

I thought that was a good example, and to think that we maybe could have

had those kinds of decisions in other areas around the disaster area if we had gotten government more out of the way and let the local and those people make those decisions, but they had to make the right ones in preparation, too. That is the part that I think that the Committee on Government Reform will bring out here so that Americans will see it with a true perspective.

If I could, I would appreciate the opportunity to yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) who knows her mind, comes here and speaks it, speaks up for the right causes and the right principles; and I am very pleased to be associated with the gentlewoman from North Carolina.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed listening to my colleague from Iowa, and we share a lot of things in common, being able to know our own minds and speak them. I think they are in the face sometimes of running against the flow, but I think that is what the people of our respective States sent us here for, and so I think that that is what we should be doing.

I have appreciated the comments that you have made. I heard a little bit from my classmate, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), and his comments that he was making, too, and I think that all of us owe a great debt to the people from our districts who have stepped up and helped in so many ways.

I know that the people of the 5th Congressional District of North Carolina, my district, have been extremely generous with their time and money in helping with the hurricane relief. They, and all the other people, have exemplified what a wonderful country we live in and how volunteers do step up when we need them to.

Our government can do very, very many great things, and our government does do many great things. We have a lot of fabulous people who work for the Federal Government and the State and local governments, too; but there are things that we are not equipped to do.

I, like you and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), have been extremely saddened by the devastation that we have seen inflicted by these hurricanes. They are not the greatest disasters necessarily that have hit our country, but they have certainly been the greatest ones that have come in a long time.

I think that what our military and the Federal agencies have done has been positive, but I think that we have to do more at the State level and the local level; and I think we have to urge people to do more through the volunteer organizations, as you talked about.

I supported \$10 billion in aid that we gave for this relief. I have supported every other bill that has come through except the one big omnibus bill that we had, the \$52 billion bill.

□ 1915

We have done a lot to provide relief measures, tax relief measures for peo-

ple, for college students, for workers and worker training programs. But my concern is that we spend the money that we spend here from the Federal level wisely. As a State Senator, I thought we should spend our government's money wisely, but we have to be extremely careful that we do not let our hearts override our heads. If I am spending my own money, it is okay if I let my heart dictate. But if I am spending other people's money, I think I have to make sure that I am voting with my head and not with my heart.

One of the concerns that I have is that we have oversight in the money that is being spent on the hurricane relief. We have to have oversight and accountability or else we will waste the precious money that we have. Every dollar wasted is a dollar not going to help some family in need or some agency in need. And I think that it is shameful that members of the minority party have often exploited the suffering and loss of life in this tragedy to score political points. We do not need to be dealing with partisan issues here. We need to work together to help the people of the gulf coast. But we need to do it in the most effective and fiscally responsible way possible.

I supported the select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation For and Response to Hurricane Katrina. I think that that is the way we should be operating. We are going to have a full investigation, as the gentleman mentioned, and the report is going to come out on February 15. All the facts have to come out so that we can take steps on the Federal, State and local level to make sure that we do not have a debacle like we had there before. I think it is very important we examine the role of the Federal Government in disaster relief.

I am really proud to be a member of the Committee on Government Reform, and I appreciate my colleague from Iowa mentioning the Committee on Government Reform and the potential role it has to play in looking at this. What I hope is that the Committee on Government Reform is going to review many, many government programs and how they operate, and that this will be a catalyst for us to see what we are doing, particularly with rules and regulations as they apply to what is happening in the recovery.

But as we do that, it seems to me we should expand the way we look at rules and regulations. Are they doing what we need them to do? Not only what went wrong with Hurricane Katrina, but what can we do to streamline the way we operate? I want measured, common sense solutions to what we have seen as a result of the hurricane, but I want common sense solutions to all of the problems that we face in this country, and I think our citizens are saying that.

I know when I am at home, people are saying please do not just throw money at this problem. Let us use this as an opportunity to make things bet-

ter in the future, not just put a Band-Aid on the issues, but make sure we do not lose the opportunity to find out what went wrong, fix that, and then go even further. And let us reduce the role of the Federal Government, because as my colleague said, in many cases just some good common sense on the part of average citizens can solve a lot of problems and keep us from wasting a lot of money in trying to solve a problem.

So I commend the gentleman for having this special order tonight, for bringing this to our colleagues' attention. We need to keep talking about it. We need to keep talking about it in a positive way, not a negative way. We need to say let us look for solutions, let us solve the problems, and let us make the gulf coast a better place to live. Let us make our entire country a better place to live by reducing the role of the Federal Government in our lives.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for her contribution to this discussion and this debate and her involvement on the Committee on Government Reform, which has got an important role to play, and always has when it comes time to streamline government and bring more responsibility out of government.

This is an especially important time. There are a lot of Federal dollars being poured into this region as we speak. And as the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) said, she voted no on the \$52 billion. I am one of those people that voted no on the \$52 billion. Actually, \$51.8 billion, to be precise, not that a couple hundred million dollars is not splitting hairs in this Congress, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is. And I voted no because there was approximately \$5 billion in there that was easily identifiable as not emergency spending, Mr. Speaker. It was money that was being directed towards 300,000 trailer houses, of which 270,000 were back ordered. Back ordered trailer houses, and mitigation of future disasters is not emergency spending.

I wanted to focus the money on emergency spending, and I wanted to get about another \$10 billion down there to keep FEMA going for another week so that we could do a better job of oversight. Because, as you know, once the money goes out the door, it is a lot harder to watch where it is spent than it is to put the strings on it before it leaves the door.

I believe we could have done a better job of that, but I do believe that we are joining together here to do a better job and looking back on some of that appropriations, to do the best we can to make sure it is spent as well as we can in any future requests. I want to make sure that we weigh in very carefully on where those dollars go.

That is the biggest reason that I went down there fairly early in this, on September 11 and 12, and I got a good look at all of New Orleans from the air. I also flew down from the Corps of Engineers' headquarters there over the

Mississippi River, which runs approximately 90 miles south, in a little bit of a winding pattern down to the Gulf of Mexico where the Mississippi River outlets into the gulf. Most people in the upper Midwest think that New Orleans is on the coast, that it is the outlet of the Mississippi, but in fact it is another 90 miles or so. Of course, when I was there, it was only about 75, I believe, because the water was so high and the damage that was done it really shortened the Mississippi River by a significant proportion.

Nonetheless, that disaster that I saw down along the channeling of the Mississippi River, or I will say next to the Mississippi River channel, where the river has perhaps, and I will state the information that I have is that the levees built to keep the Mississippi River in the channel are 25 feet above sea level. Then on the west side of the Mississippi, from the levee and going west, there is perhaps an average of about a half mile of bottom land there. That is protected with another levee about 25 feet high which protects the gulf, so that the gulf does not come into the backside of that levee that controls the Mississippi River.

That area in between those two 25-foot levees is the area that is about a half mile wide and generally about 90 miles long, perhaps 45 square miles, with six or seven towns in there. Those six or seven towns were all wiped out. The wind hit them all hard and damaged them severely. Even some of the best structures were really damaged severely.

The wind hit, and then the water surged over the levee from the Mississippi River side and flooded that area in between those two 25-foot dikes with that half a mile in between, and then the water surged over from the gulf side and did the same thing. So I am going to say wind damage like I have only seen in the worst of tornadoes, the entire area wind damaged like that, with entire buildings just blown away into splinters. Then, when the flood came from the surge, any buildings that were not blown away were mostly washed away. They floated and crashed up against each other against the levee.

Mr. Speaker, I have here on the easel a picture of one of the better built buildings down there in that bottom land parallel to the Mississippi River. This may be, just guessing, perhaps 30 miles south of New Orleans along the Mississippi. This is a building that is built with steel pilings driven in, and who knows how deep, but down deep enough to get a very solid bearing in order to build a building that can withstand a hurricane and can withstand the kind of water surge that was going to come.

As you can see, as good as it was built, it still blew everything from here on down away, and there is not a lot left to salvage here. One might be surprised that the structure seems to be fairly sound. I saw this all over, but I

also square mile after square mile that had been homes that was nothing but a footing or a foundation or a concrete platform. I did not bring pictures of those because they are not so impressive, Mr. Speaker. That is just water-covered concrete footings and nothing left.

There were trees where the wind blew so hard it simply blew the leaves off the tree and the trees died. The salt water that came in, of course, killed most everything green. That is another piece that we do not hear much about, Mr. Speaker.

I have saved this particular picture because, in a way, it is kind of heart-breaking. I was walking along a levee south of Slidell, Louisiana, a levee that runs over towards New Orleans. And as I looked at the devastation after devastation, debris after debris, it was numbing after a while. It is hard to be shocked. In fact, you just get that sense of how can anything be worse and you start counting things in the trees, like counting life jackets that are hanging from the trees, hundreds of them; and counting refrigerators up in the trees, and I will say dozens of them. Odd things that stick out in a person's mind.

I ended up with about 1,800 pictures, which when I go back and look at them, I see things in those pictures that I did not see when I was there in person. But this caught my eye. Laying on the ground beside a place that used to be a home, and it says Happy Anniversary. This has not been disturbed at all. It is exactly the way it laid. You can see where the grass is laid over the top of the handle. Whether it was a husband that bought that for the wife, or the wife for the husband, or the children for the parents, or whether it was the grandchildren for the grandparents, I do not know, but when I look at that, I see one of the doves that was on top is broken and laying here and it seems to reflect on what happened to some of the families that lost a loved one maybe have not found a loved one yet.

We have done a pretty good job of locating people, but the effort still goes on. And when the waters came up, and they came so fast that there might be a 17- to 20-foot surge that would go from zero to 17 to 20 feet in a matter of 3 minutes, maybe 4 minutes, that was not much time to get away. A lot of people had to go up the stairs of their house up to their attics. And when the water came and filled their attic, they needed something to chop their way out through the roof in order to climb out on the roof to save themselves from the flood.

I do not know how many people did not have a means to chop themselves out of their own attic. I do not know, but as I look at this, I cannot help but think that it may not be this family that lost someone, but I believe it represents many of the families that did lose someone who was celebrating their anniversary not all that long ago.

On the positive side, Mr. Speaker, this is a very resilient Nation, and we

have a strong character and a strong resilience. We also have a sense of defiance, which is rooted back in the defiance of King George. So when we are met with disaster, no matter how bad the disaster, no matter how bad the blow, we have people that stand up and they look around and they think, all right, if that is the best you can give me, then I can take that and I am going to rebuild. I will put my life back together, my business back together, put my house back together, and I am going to live here and make it. I am going to be profitable and contribute back to this country and the neighborhood and the economy.

This is a symbol of that defiance, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the things that warmed my heart as we flew by there. The individual or the family that owned this place had lost almost everything. This is mostly trash and rubble. If you look up here, this is debris that has all been pushed over by the wind. That is just floating debris, and the water has been over the top of this levee. That is the Mississippi River right at the top of the picture.

As the owner came and found nothing, he did find a flag pole that was still standing. There is no way the flag that was on that flag pole originally survived that wind. But, Mr. Speaker, the first thing he did was went and got a fresh Old Glory and ran it up to the top of that flag pole in defiance of the storm and in proud independence that he would be, and I assume it is a he, rebuilding.

One day I will go back down there, and I hope I can identify that flag pole, because I think there is going to be some buildings that have been reconstructed again, and the place will one day look better than it did the day before the storm hit.

□ 1930

We have a lot of big decisions to make: where the Federal dollars will go, where they will come from. We have an obligation to look for offsets. We cannot continue to put debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren. We can find the savings.

I am convinced that this Congress, working together in a bipartisan manner, will be able to find ways to save money so we can get the resources into the gulf coast to help out our friends in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, and to a lesser extent some of Florida. I am hopeful that we can join together in a way to do that.

I have a few ideas myself. I am not going to enter into this debate here tonight with them, but I have been working on my own list on how to fund Hurricane Katrina's reconstruction. It is essential that we find offsets, and we can do some reconciliation legislation. It will be a blessing for us because we will find a way to make government more efficient. We will have that debate here. It will be on the floor of Congress.

But also finding ways to pay for it is not enough. We also have to spend the

money wisely. We need to limit it to the extent we can while still taking care of our obligations from the Federal Government.

I have looked at the things that we need to do to protect New Orleans again. It is below sea level. There was 16 feet of water standing in parts of New Orleans. That whole area with standing water is below sea level. We have to find a way, and there was discussion whether we could construct below sea level. Those questions landed on my ears. Actually, I thought they were prudent questions that needed to be asked, deliberated upon, and we need to bring more facts to the table before we can come up with a definitive answer.

But when you look at New Orleans and see the downtown buildings that rise up out of the water, and I was able to see it on a day when it was a bright blue sky, and the sunlight reflecting off the downtown buildings made the water blue, as the downtown buildings stood up, I looked and it was clear to me, yes, you cannot let a great city like New Orleans stand in water and not be reconstructed better than it was before. We need to rebuild the city, but we need to rebuild the city in a wise fashion.

My first recommendation is New Orleans, the levees that protect it and the systems that protect it from a hurricane, be constructed in preparation for a category 5 hurricane. If you can imagine a worse one, let us reconstruct for that. Let us do the hurricane mitigation work so the worst storm we can imagine cannot come in and do the kind of damage that Hurricane Katrina did to New Orleans.

The first step is as the water in Lake Pontchartrain increased by that 14 to 15-foot average water depth, and as it went up another 8 to 10 feet, because of the storm surge from the gulf, as the low pressure center raised the level of the water in the ocean and that hard south wind at 150 miles an hour drove that water up into the lake, stacked it up against the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and filled that lake up with 8 to 10 feet more water, and then when the hurricane shifted to the east and winds came from the north, it drove that high wall of water down against the levees on the south side of Lake Pontchartrain. The waves added another 8 to 10 feet, it washed over the levees and flooded the city.

We know what happened, and to prevent it from happening again, I believe we need to do the engineering study, do the financial analysis, but repair the levees on the outlet of Lake Pontchartrain to a level that can protect Lake Pontchartrain itself from a category 5 hurricane so it cannot be breached, and to put hurricane gates in where necessary so we can close those in the event of a storm and keep the ocean water out of Lake Pontchartrain. That is step one.

Step two is if it gets in there or if there is a surge of the water in there,

and I do not know if it is possible to have that kind of an effort under any kind of a storm, but if the water does get into Lake Pontchartrain, then we need to be prepared for the second level of protection.

That second level would be to build the levees between Lake Pontchartrain and New Orleans to an elevation that will protect New Orleans from 25 feet above sea level from a category 5, and then to put hurricane gates in at the inlets of the canals, the 17th Street Canal being the most infamous of them all. That can be done and protected. We need to come out with a cost and engineering analysis of that and make a decision in this Congress.

I believe if that cost is anywhere near reasonable, we need to get that done before there is new construction going on down below sea level in New Orleans itself. So that is two systems that would protect New Orleans from a flood.

I point out there is a significant amount of construction done in the world below sea level. Holland is one of those examples. I am told a third of Holland is below sea level; and when I was told that, I said they have reclaimed another portion from the sea since when I went to school and a fourth of the nation was underwater. That is probably the case. They continually reclaim. They construct below sea level. I believe we can do that in the area of New Orleans. I have some more questions from the engineering perspective that I do not have the answers to, but protect the outlet of Lake Pontchartrain to keep the ocean water out and storm surge out, and keep the water in Lake Pontchartrain there by putting gates at the inlet of the canals, and perhaps raise the level of the hurricane levees on Lake Pontchartrain.

The third thing is the pump stations have to be raised up well above the high water mark of this flood, and they need to have redundancies built in so they can pump water if the power goes out. If the power goes out, they automatically kick on. And the water that is being pumped out of New Orleans now over the last week and a half or so, it is a massive quantity of water. It is 27,000 cubic feet per second, more than twice the amount of water that runs down the Missouri River at Sioux City, Iowa, in the area where I live.

Mr. Speaker, Florida has a lot of experience with reconstructing in preparation for category 5 hurricanes. They have perfected a lot of the method of how to prepare for a hurricane, how to evacuate, how to zone the houses and the buildings so they are prepared for that kind of wind and damage. Requiring shutters is one thing, and building off the ground is another. There are a number of ideas from an architectural standpoint. There is much that has already been established. We should look at that opportunity to take the language of those zoning restrictions that they have and the emergency response system that they developed in Florida

and bring that into Louisiana, Mississippi and parts of Texas; but Louisiana needing the most help, it appears.

I think we can learn from our experience. We need to also be able to have a Federal requirement on the construction of the levee so if there is a levee that can be breached and put that much property in jeopardy, we need to have Federal oversight over that levee. There is much that can be done and should be done.

I will be involved in the effort to identify the mitigation work and looking at the cost and the engineering design and the recommendations. I would also point out that there will be a population loss in New Orleans. I do not know that number, no one knows that number, but perhaps a loss of a quarter of the population, perhaps more. If that is the case, the homes that will be condemned, many are still under water today, that will be the last place that needs to be reconstructed.

The reconstruction of the homes can go in the higher elevation areas where they do not have water. Those decisions need to be made so people can make plans for the future. That is part of this Congress' responsibility. Whenever there are Federal dollars, we have an obligation to the taxpayers that they are spent wisely.

There are private sector solutions to this, and we need to listen to our representatives from that area, those that are advocating for less pressure on taxpayers and more pressure on individuals, and the solutions of tax credits and I will say commerce-friendly zones, tax free zones, for example, lay all of those ideas out on the table.

The gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JINDAL) both have been very active, along with the other Representatives from Louisiana. The gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCREERY) has been very vocal here. I am looking forward to their input and working in cooperation with them so we put a solution together that will leave a legacy of making it better when things are bad in the event of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2360, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma (during the Special Order of Mr. KING of Iowa), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-242) on the resolution (H. Res. 474) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany 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, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.