

disasters over the years, and FEMA personnel performed admirably as our State struggled to recover from Hurricane Fran in 1996 and Hurricane Floyd in 1999, as well as other floods, tornadoes, and ice storms. Fran featured devastating winds and Floyd produced a 500-year flood in northeastern North Carolina. Fortunately, then-FEMA director James Lee Witt was a professional with marching orders from the White House to do whatever was needed to save life and property. FEMA in the 1990s delivered vital services the American people have a right to expect. Unfortunately, that model of success was replaced by the current administration with the failed approach of cronyism and incompetence. Congress must now step in and provide leadership to fix a broken system.

However, unlike some of my colleagues in this body, my solution to fixing FEMA is not to strip it out of the Department of Homeland Security. This action will not only result in an ill-conceived division of duties, resources and responsibilities, but also increase bureaucracy, interagency turf wars and red tape.

I don't need to tell you, but the American people will not stand for more red tape and bureaucracy. The last thing they want to see after a disaster are Federal government officials trading business cards instead of assisting the victims of the storm. My Democratic colleagues and I have worked for months on the Homeland Security Committee to reform FEMA and to restore its standing as a quality government organization.

I am pleased that our Republican colleagues have joined together and the Homeland Security Committee passed a bill on a unanimous bipartisan vote.

H.R. 5351 addresses many of the problems and deficiencies that prevented FEMA from providing efficient and effective support of State and local officials after a disaster, whether they be natural or man-made. This legislation creates a stronger autonomous mission-oriented FEMA within the framework of the Department of Homeland Security. It restores control of the accepted emergency management cycle of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation to the agency.

It requires that the director of FEMA be a recognized emergency management professional who would serve as the day-to-day principal adviser to the President of the United States for emergency management matters. The legislation would elevate the director to the President's cabinet during times of crisis so no one could obstruct the speedy delivery of relief, personnel and resources to devastated areas in this country and around the world.

H.R. 5351 reinvigorates FEMA's regional offices and staffs them with emergency management professionals with both experience and a familiarity with the people, geography, and threats to our States and municipalities.

Importantly, this bill gives FEMA budgetary independence and prevents the Secretary of Homeland Security from siphoning money away from disaster and terrorism prevention and preparedness for other agency initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor of this bipartisan, commonsense legislation; and I urge the leadership to schedule for a vote this legislation as soon as possible. Our Nation and its people will not stand for another botched response from this Federal Government, nor should they. This administration should be held accountable for its many mistakes, and this bill would allow FEMA to fulfill its mission as a primary Federal responder and support agency in times of disaster.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

BECOMING AMERICA THE DEPENDENT

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, America, which should value our birthright of independence, is all too quickly becoming America the dependent.

We are dangerously dependent, for example, on foreign oil for our energy needs. Indeed, we import nearly 75 percent of it; a third of our trade deficit is due to this oil dependency. We could become energy independent here at home with energy sources here that we would invent and create and refine, and what a job-rich America that would create.

America is becoming more and more dependent upon imports from foreign manufacturers than we are exports from our country in all fields: in appliances, in clothing, even food. This year America may become for the first time in its history a net food importer.

The balance of payments which had been the pride of our country, more exports than imports, has been reduced to red ink. The monthly trade deficit for March was just in 1 month over \$62 billion, and we are still on another record annual trade deficit pace.

In fact, our monthly trade deficit figure is so huge it equals the entire annual budget of our Department of Vet-

erans Affairs. Veterans fought to make us free from foreign tyranny, but the new tyranny is taking a different form.

At the end of March, our overall publicly held debt was a staggering \$4.6 trillion, not counting promises that the government has made to pay for retirement programs and health benefits that are due to the American people in the amount of over \$8.4 trillion. Now, would you believe that nearly half, 43 percent of this debt, overall debt, of that amount, \$2 trillion is now held by foreigners.

We have already heard that it took 200 years for our Nation to accumulate \$1 trillion of debt. But would you believe we are now at the point where \$1 trillion of our public debt is held by Japan, China and Hong Kong? As this chart illustrates, Japan is the largest holder of our debt, followed by Europe, followed by China and Hong Kong, which are rising very quickly.

In fact, would you believe that between October of 2003 and March of this year, China alone more than doubled its holdings of our public debt from \$151 billion to \$321 billion. The United States government, our taxpayers this year will pay more than \$200 billion in interest on publicly-held debt with nearly \$100 billion going to foreign holders of our debt. That's right. We are going to pay interest to foreign holders of U.S. debt, almost five times as much as we appropriate on an annual basis for the entire U.S. Department of Energy. Imagine if we invested those dollars in ourselves. We will pay interest to foreign holders of U.S. debt nearly three times as much as we spend in a year on the Department of Housing and Urban Development to build this country from coast-to-coast.

We will pay interest to foreign holders of U.S. debt nearly twice as much as we appropriate for the entire Department of Labor. We have just had more miners killed in Kentucky, God rest their souls, because they didn't have oxygen equipment that would last them long enough that would outlast the monoxide until the rescue workers could get there.

Yet we can pay this kind of money to foreign holders of our debt. We will pay about as much interest to foreign holders of U.S. debt as we will appropriate for fighting the war in Iraq. Wow. Think about it. What do we do about it?

Without a doubt, first thing we should do is clean up our fiscal house, and that starts with balancing our budgets and digging out of this red ink. We cannot expect to continue in this fashion and remain the leader of the free world. Our currency is being devalued. We see the skittishness in the stock market, and interest rates are going up at the same time as gas prices are going up. This is very clear.

There are certain rules of economics that never fail you. We are either going to have a currency devaluation, or we are going to have inflation go out of control. But the point is, more and

more, we are going in hock to foreign interests. We need to ask, how do we take our country back? At a minimum, how do we owe the money to ourselves rather than other Nations? In prior generations, when we were faced with a problem like this, we didn't turn to foreign bankers; we turned to the American people. We did it through balancing our budget, and we did it through savings bond sales. There used to be a time when savings bonds could be purchased easily at any local bank or even in smaller denominations at our U.S. Postal Service.

It was a way the average American, who is as patriotic as anybody in this world, could invest in their own country. They could buy bonds in very small denominations, and they knew their investment was secure and that they were investing in America, not someplace else.

But in recent years, the Federal Reserve and our Treasury have gotten lazy. They are selling these denominations in big, big numbers, thousands of dollars apiece, and they like to do it through just a few cushy dealers on Wall Street. They love dealing with the big bond houses to get fees for every bond they sell. It is a very undemocratic bond system.

In fact, the Federal Reserve loves to reward their friends on Wall Street instead of strengthening our Nation down to the average citizen and their ability to own a piece of the republic. I would like to restore that spirit of independence to our country, and this method, tried and true, of savings bond purchases helped us through military wars and economic depressions.

Savings bonds can be called upon again, in a new war, to maintain America's economic independence and take it back from foreign investors who are owning larger pieces of us every day. Independence, independence, independence. Reduce America's ownership by foreign interests.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND BORDER STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for half the time before midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized and the ability to have the chance to address the House this night on the issue we all know is the most critical issue our Nation faces today, that is the security of the American borders and the sovereignty of our Nation.

I rise because I am from Texas, and I grew up crossing the Mexican border with our neighbors from Mexico all of my life. I have even been several times to the great international celebration in Nuevo Laredo for George Washington's birthday, a time in which thousands and thousands of Texans joined their neighbors in Mexico for a great fiesta. I consider Mexico, my entire life, I have considered them my friend and our neighbor to the south. I actually went to school in Mexico. I am very familiar with the country, and I have a warm regard for the people of Mexico.

However, the world we live in today is not the world I grew up in. I have had the occasion in the last 6 months to visit Nuevo Laredo with Congressman CUELLAR on two occasions. I have been down there with Congressional delegations that have visited the border to talk about the incursions into the United States by literally hundreds of thousands and millions of people coming out of Mexico across our southern borders from San Diego to Brownsville.

But the world I know is Texas, and I am going to talk about the Texas border that I am familiar with. I want to tell you that I sat out in a pickup truck on the side of the Rio Grande in a mesquite thicket in the dark with one lone border patrolman and his electronic equipment, which was a camera that scanned 2.5 miles in either direction, a stretch of the river, right in the city limits or on the edge of the city limits of Laredo, Texas.

I got to sit out there on that lonely job with that young man for a pretty good while and talk to him about what he has experienced. He says what every rancher and farmer and homeowner that lives on the border of Texas today repeats: This is not the same bunch of people that used to come across our border.

They are coming in waves, and they are doing damage and breaking into homes, and they are stealing things. Whereas they used to come by a pepper's house with their hat in their hands and the rancher wife would put dinner out on the back porch for them, today they break into the house; they have no regard for private property. They have no regard for anything that is going on in Texas. They just think it is their right to come into Texas, and they are acting that way.

This young man told me, he said, I asked him, I said, how many people? The first time I visited was in the wintertime. I said, how many people will come across? He said, well, it is winter. Maybe a couple of hundred tonight. But in the summer, maybe a couple of thousand in my sector that I will turn back on some given nights.

This is a number that way surpasses anything we have ever experienced in our State, and all the other States along the border are experiencing this problem.

But, you know, I have been thinking about this, and this is not a problem

that just started last week. I firmly believe that we enhanced the problem of the Mexican border, especially our southern border, with the amnesty bill that we passed in 1986. We gave a message, and in that message, it was clear: Come on in, boys, you are welcome, and in they came.

Their thoughts were, I can go, most of them came for jobs. But I used to be able to say, when I was a young man and a teenager, the people who came over here are coming to work. I am telling you, you can't say that today. You can't say that every person that crosses that border comes to work. That border patrolman told me a tale that will chill your soul. In the El Paso sector in December, they stopped 15 illegal immigrants, all of whom claimed to be from Mexico, all of whom voluntarily agreed to return.

So they fingerprinted them and processed them and took them back to Mexico. They ran those fingerprints through, I think it is NCI or whatever it is that they use with the Border Patrol, and about five of those fingerprints had previously been recorded by the United States Government. Those prints came from a cave in Afghanistan. Now those were not people coming across our border from Mexico to get a job. But they were blending in with those who were.

We live in the world of 9/11. We live in a time when an enemy has launched and successfully accomplished the worst attack on the United States in the history of the United States. We have people we don't know coming across our border.

We are doing a lot of talk about enforcement. We are doing a lot of talk about writing new laws. We go, oh, my gosh, let us rush out, and we have got to come up and figure out how we get a work program. We have got to come up with citizenship for these people. We have got to know what to do with these people. Sure, these are problems that we have to address sometime, and I am sure soon.

But my concern is, we are not analyzing this problem the way the problems should be analyzed. The legislation we are hearing that is coming this way from the Senate, and my way of thinking, is a totally improper way to analyze a problem of the United States.

I spent almost 21 years as a district judge in Texas. I had many, many, times, where I had a multiple-issue case that I had to choose. But a jury would use the same analysis to try to figure out a solution to a problem. So I will use that example. But the same example could be used for a surgeon in an emergency room.

You have a problem, and you look at that problem, and you say, well, this problem has multiple issues we have to deal with. We have evidence to cover these issues. We need to examine those issues, that evidence closely and come up with a solution to these problems.

But first where is the ongoing harm? Where is the bleeding? You have got to