

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, first let me thank the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for your leadership and for managing the bill, and also for your clarity of why we are offering this resolution today and for your support. I also thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for your leadership and your support. To the chairman of the committee, Chairman WAXMAN, and our ranking member, Mr. DAVIS, I commend them and thank them for working together to bring this bill to the floor, as well as to our leadership.

Madam Speaker, I want to also express my appreciation to the over 60 cosponsors of this bipartisan resolution for their support.

This resolution is extremely straightforward. What it does is detail and recognize the value of international travel, and request the President to issue a proclamation calling on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses and other entities and the people of the United States to observe National Passport Month with appropriate ceremonies, programs and activities.

The purpose of National Passport Month is to create a time to educate the public about the incredible opportunities available to those who obtain passports as well as the positive impact that international travel has on individuals and on our country.

Today, and this is quite a revealing statistic, only about 25 percent of Americans have a passport. Twenty-five percent. That means 75 percent of Americans are limited in their ability to travel abroad because they don't have a passport. As a result, they are unable to take advantage of the enriching opportunities presented by international travel.

As a member of the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, I understand and appreciate the value and importance of international travel and the impact of our foreign aid and the positive value that our foreign aid brings to those throughout the world.

Many years ago I had the opportunity to live in Great Britain for a couple of years, and can say with certainty that there is no substitute for the experience you get from visiting other countries, from meeting with people, from tasting the food, from interacting with the culture. It changes the way we see the world. It broadens our horizons, it deepens our appreciation for different countries and cultures and our shared humanity. It also helps us to learn, to understand, and to tolerate and to mutually respect other cultures. Not only does travel provide enriching opportunities for the individual, it can also have profound

benefits for our Nation as a whole through people-to-people contact.

In addition, having a passport and traveling abroad enables others to see our contributions firsthand, including the tremendous amount of humanitarian aid given by Americans through the public and private sectors.

Americans of all ages are our best ambassadors, and we should promote policies that encourage them to travel, to forge connections with people from other countries, to foster mutual understanding and tolerance, and to help open new doors for peaceful coexistence.

The timing of our efforts could not be more critical. I think we all recognize that America needs a boost in foreign public opinion, and I am confident that connections made with American travelers can and will make a huge difference in improving our image abroad. For all of these reasons, when Lonely Planet, which I am pleased to say is located in Oakland in my district, first raised the idea of a National Passport Month, I immediately got it. I embraced it.

I am proud to have introduced H. Res. 554 and to be a part of this campaign to recognize the importance of international travel, and I am excited by the support we have received.

Last year, Lonely Planet presented me with over 5,000 petition signatures from people all over our country who support these efforts, and this campaign has the support of a broad coalition of over 70 supporting travel organizations and associations to corporations like American Express and Yahoo.

Moreover, the Department of State is on record in supporting September as National Passport Month. Let me just read a quote from their letter: "Since September is a time of the year when schools are reopening and many students are considering travel or study abroad, it is a highly appropriate month to promote public awareness of the value of the United States passport. The Department shares your appreciation of the U.S. passport and supports your resolution."

Given the recent problems with passport backlogs, this resolution is even more timely. The administration must make passports a priority and ensure that we have the resources available to process them in a timely manner. I thank all of the supporters of this resolution.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers on my side, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 554.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY AND PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SEVERE FLOODING IN EASTERN KANSAS

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 544) expressing the sympathy and pledging the support of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 544

Whereas, on June 26, 2007, a storm system lasting several days was responsible for bringing heavy and torrential rainfall to eastern Kansas;

Whereas communities in eastern Kansas received up to 21 inches of rain within a four-day period, resulting in devastating floods throughout the region;

Whereas the flooding led to one person's death and more than 3,100 homes and businesses destroyed or sustaining major damage;

Whereas communities in at least 20 counties were evacuated;

Whereas flood waters caused a petroleum refinery tank system to overflow into the Verdigris River, releasing an estimated 71,000 gallons of crude oil into the Coffeyville community and surrounding area;

Whereas, on June 30, 2007, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius declared a state of disaster for Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Elk, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson, and Woodson counties;

Whereas, on July 2, 2007, President George W. Bush declared a major Federal disaster for the State of Kansas that included Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Elk, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson, and Woodson counties;

Whereas other surrounding counties in Kansas also suffered damage from heavy flooding; and

Whereas areas in Oklahoma and Texas experienced devastating floods that resulted in loss of human life and millions of dollars in damage to homes and businesses: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its heartfelt sympathy for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007;

(2) conveys its gratitude to the local, State, and Federal officials and emergency personnel who responded swiftly to the crisis, including members of the Kansas National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol;

(3) recognizes the generous support of volunteers, private and corporate donors, religious groups, and charitable organizations that have given generously toward the relief efforts following the destructive flooding; and

(4) commends the spirit of the people of Kansas, who consistently demonstrate an

outpouring of compassionate care for neighbors facing adversity and hardship.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont?

There was no objection.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. On June 26, 2007, a storm system lasting several days was responsible for bringing heavy and torrential rainfall to eastern Kansas. The affected communities received up to 21 inches of rain within a 4-day period, resulting in devastating floods throughout the region.

The flooding forced at least 20 counties to evacuate and led to the destruction of more than 3,100 homes and businesses. It caused a petroleum refinery tank system to overflow into the Verdigris River, releasing an estimated 71,000 gallons of crude oil into the Coffeyville community and surrounding area.

This resolution expresses heartfelt sympathy for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused flooding in eastern Kansas.

Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague, Representative TODD TIAHRT, for introducing this legislation and urge the swift passage of this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

The massive floods that devastated 20 counties in eastern Kansas this past June left thousands of residents out of their homes. Torrential thunderstorms pounded the area beginning on June 26 and continued for 4 days. In the end, the area was hit with 21 inches of rain, causing rivers to flood, forcing county-wide evacuations, schools and businesses to close, as well as causing a local oil refinery to overflow and release 71,000 gallons of crude oil into an already-flooded area.

The floods left one person dead and more than 3,100 homes and businesses destroyed or damaged. On June 30, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius declared a state of disaster for 17 counties, which President Bush later declared as Federal disasters.

Through the help of local, State and Federal officials and emergency personnel, evacuations were carried out quickly and safely. Order was maintained in the area with the help of the Kansas National Guard and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

It is important that we recognize the general support of the many volunteers, private and corporate donors, religious groups and other charitable organizations who assisted the communities in their time of need. The actions of many public servants, neighbors and community leaders helped thousands through this hardship.

This resolution expresses our sincere sympathy for the victims of this devastating storm.

Madam Speaker, I would give the gentleman from Kansas as much time as he may consume, my good friend (Mr. TIAHRT).

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for his contributions and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) in helping me through this process of getting recognition to the people of Kansas who have suffered under this flood.

Madam Speaker, we have had a lot of trouble in Kansas this year. Out of our 105 counties, 102 have been declared a disaster at one time or another. It started in January with a 100-year event, an ice storm. We lost a lot of cattle. Power was down in half of the State. It was a very difficult time.

Later on in the year we had a series of tornadoes that were considered another 100-year event. It included a level 5 or T-5 tornado that hit Greensburg, Kansas, and the small community of 1,500 was completely wiped out by that tornado.

This was the third wave of natural disaster that has hit Kansas this year. It actually encompassed about 21 counties when it was all said and done. As you heard earlier, we lost 3,100 homes.

I have been in this flood area about five times since the flooding has occurred. I have been through the refinery that is now back up and running. The small community of Coffeyville seemed to be the worst hit. We have had quite a bit of difficulty getting through the problem, complicated by the oil that was spilled into many homes in that area.

Coffeyville resources is in the process of trying to rectify that situation; but I am very pleased that the jobs have never ceased at that refinery. They started the cleanup process right away, and they will continue to remain in that community. It is one of three refineries that we have in Kansas, and it does bring a lot of jobs to the area. It is also unique in that it is one of two refineries in the world that takes the by-product of making petroleum or gasoline from petroleum and it turns it into fertilizer for farmers in the area. So it is a very progressive refinery, and it has been a good source of jobs in that area.

I would like to acknowledge a few people who were very instrumental in bringing that community and other communities, like Independence, Kansas, back to their feet: Independence Mayor Rick Mott; Independence City Manager Paul Sasse; Independence Po-

lice Chief Ken Parker; Independence Fire Chief Dale Rail; Coffeyville Mayor Virgil Horn; Coffeyville City Manager Jeff Morris; Coffeyville Police Chief Joe Humble; Coffeyville Fire Chief Greg Allen; State Senators Derek Schmidt and Dwayne Umbarger; Kansas Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Tod M. Bunting; Governor Kathleen Sebelius; State Representatives Jeff King, Virgil Peck and Kasha Kelly; and Montgomery County Commissioners Billy Lewark-Wood, Tony Fowler and Gene Tucker.

There are other people that were involved like Jim Miller with Emergency Management and the Kansas National Guard and the Kansas Highway Patrol that did a great deal of work during that time to make sure we had minimal casualties.

The one story I remember is the gentleman who was notified to get out of the area because the floodwaters were rising.

□ 1230

He chose to go back to his home to save his coin collection. I don't know what he was carrying his coins in, but he was later rescued by the Coffeyville Fire Department, and he lost all his coins.

So I think there was a good time for people to respond to the need, the disaster, and get out, but those that chose to stay behind did so at their own peril. I think it's a good lesson for all of America when emergency situations arise and our first responders are telling you to please leave the area, don't go back for your coin collection or anything else. Your personal safety is first.

Coins can be replaced, possessions can be replaced, but our human lives are one thing that cannot be replaced. So I'm very pleased that we had minimal casualties and only one fatality in that situation. Incidentally, that one fatality was a gentleman who chose not to respond to the warnings and stayed in his dwelling against the will of the people who were trying to rescue him.

There's another piece of legislation that I would like to mention that is the first step of reaching out to other areas, other Members of Congress who have had similar flooding since July. Now, they have been in States like Indiana, in their counties. It's been in Illinois, been in Texas, Nebraska. I have a bill that will help Kansas get back on its feet, but I would like to reach out to the other Members of Congress who have experienced flooding and ask them to join with me to help Kansas, as well as their areas.

I think we should have one bill that would address all the needs because they're very similar. The communities need to have the cleanup. They need to have some rehabilitation of historic buildings. They need to have infrastructure rebuilt. They need to have businesses supporting the cleanup.

So the bill that I have is H.R. 3444, and if we can work with those Members

of Congress, Madam Speaker, that have had similar flooding problems and have one bill, I think it would be easier for the House to schedule. Plus, we would meet the needs of all our communities.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia. There was one thing that I failed to mention, and that is that Coffeyville Resources, which is the refinery, has made plans to make things right. They've responded to the community. Those homes that were damaged by the spilt oil, they have asked to purchase those homes. They're going to turn that land back over to the city. They're going to make a park in that area.

So I think it's significant to note that when some corporation is a good public citizen, a good corporate citizen, that we ought to acknowledge that publicly because we need more of that.

I thank you for the time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to another gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding me the time, and I am here to lend my support for the gentleman from Kansas' efforts in regard to once again disaster striking our State.

We come from a State, Mr. TIAHRT and I and the rest of the Members of the Kansas congressional delegation, that really has known tough times over a long history. But especially within the last few months, really within the last year, Kansas has had winter storms that involved hail and freezing rain, ice, snow, as well as tornados. Greensburg, Kansas, became a national location, known by people around the world for a tornado that destroyed an entire town, and now most recently a large portion of our State has been struck by tremendous rainfall resulting in flooding.

I appreciate the gentleman from Kansas' (Mr. TIAHRT) leadership in bringing attention to this plight that we face in our State.

In fact, there are 69 counties in the First Congressional District. All but four of them have been declared natural disaster areas this year, since January 1 by the President, and FEMA and other emergency responders are at work.

The encouraging thing about our State is that local folks respond, and we've seen tremendous efforts by individual citizens from across the State arriving to help their neighbors, and we've seen the collection plates passed on Sunday morning, money being raised, response being had, and we've had tremendous support from our law enforcement community, from our emergency preparedness officials, as well as State and Federal officials. In many instances, I would report that FEMA has responded in a very noble and adequate way, and we're very grateful for that help.

Again, all the disaster has caused many Members of Congress to stop and talk to us from Kansas and wish us well. We've had encouragement and support from leaders around the world, in fact, due to the tremendous natural disasters that have occurred.

And so I'm here to express my support for Mr. TIAHRT's efforts and let him know that we all care about the portion of the State that has now been affected by these floods and will work closely with him, following his leadership to see that the response is appropriate from the Federal Government and that Kansans once again rebound from this significant natural disaster.

I, too, would like to commend Coffeyville Resources for their response. It's caused significant losses within the community of Coffeyville. It's also had a consequence upon all Kansans. It's one of our three refineries, and so gas and diesel prices have been affected as a result of the closing, at least temporarily, of a refinery in our State. But their responses, both in getting back into business and their response to being a good corporate citizen within the community of Coffeyville, should be recognized.

And finally, I thank the support we have had from my colleagues here in the United States House of Representatives. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and so I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) and the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and my colleague Mr. WESTMORELAND and urge the passage of this resolution.

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 544, recognizing the victims of floods in Kansas.

On June 26, a storm brought several days of torrential rainfall to Kansas, leading to major damage, including the destruction of 3,100 homes and businesses, and even more tragically, one person's death.

Within a 4 day period, some communities received 21 inches of rain. Communities in 20 counties were evacuated.

This resolution simply expresses heartfelt sympathy for the victims of these devastating thunderstorms, in addition to conveying gratitude to the local, State, and Federal officials and emergency personnel who responded swiftly to the crisis, including the Kansas National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol and recognizing the generous support of volunteers, private and corporate donors, religious groups, and charitable organizations that have given generously toward the relief efforts following the destructive flooding.

Most importantly, this resolution commends the spirit of the people of Kansas, who consistently demonstrate their strength, not only in rebuilding their own lives in the face of adversity and hardship, but also through their outpouring of compassionate care for neighbors.

"Ad astra per aspera," is our Kansas motto—"to the stars through difficulties."

I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 544, acknowledging the destruction left behind by recent severe weather in Kansas, yet celebrating the resilience of the Kansans rebuilding homes, businesses, lives, and dreams.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 544.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 165) supporting the goals and ideals of National Teen Driver Safety Week.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 165

Whereas motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults in the United States, and many of these deaths are preventable;

Whereas almost 7,500 drivers between the ages of 15 and 20 years were involved in fatal crashes in 2005 throughout the United States;

Whereas the fatality rate in the United States for drivers between the ages of 16 and 19 years, based on miles driven, is 4 times the fatality rate for drivers between the ages of 25 and 69 years;

Whereas the majority of teen driver crashes in the United States are due to driver error and speeding, and 15 percent of the crashes are due to drunk driving;

Whereas roughly two-thirds of the teenagers killed in motor vehicle accidents in the United States each year do not use seatbelts;

Whereas approximately 63 percent of teen passenger deaths in the United States occur while other teenagers are driving;

Whereas it is necessary to explore effective ways to reduce the crash risk for young drivers by focusing research and outreach efforts on areas of teen driving that show the most promise for improving safety;

Whereas the National Teen Driver Survey, developed with input from teenagers and administered by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, demonstrates a national need to increase overall awareness about the safe use of electronic handheld devices, the risk of nighttime and fatigued driving, the importance of consistent seatbelt use, and the