

have the rank and commission of major-general of the United States.”

He was a man that was admired by our first President George Washington and that affection was mutual. In fact Marquis de Lafayette even named his son after our first President, and Washington was the godfather to Lafayette's child.

This is a gentleman that is so revered in American history that in 2002, he was posthumously made an honorary citizen of the United States; one of only six persons so honored. Likewise, a portrait of Lafayette hangs in the House Chamber.

Marquis de Lafayette, held a strong belief in freedom, he advocated the abolition of slavery in the Americas, he favored equal legal rights for religious minorities in France, and he was a prominent figure in the French Revolution. Now some will cite the fact that Lafayette himself owned slaves as a sign of hypocrisy, but he encouraged George Washington to free his own slaves as an example to others. Lafayette would subsequently purchase an estate in French Guinea and settle his slaves there and offered a place for Washington's slaves to live also. Lafayette was famously quoted as saying, “I would never have drawn my sword in the cause of America if I could have conceived thereby that I was founding a land of slavery.”

The fact that Lafayette was the first foreign dignitary to address the House of Representatives symbolizes the wonderful relationship between France and the United States. In light of the recent elections in France, I hope that our leaders in Congress, the Senate, and the White House will maintain our strong ties with the newly elected leader of France, Nicolas Sarkozy. France is a nation that the United States has shared the same values with since its inception. Lafayette symbolized the assistance America received from Europe in the struggle for independence, just like United States aid to France during World Wars I and II stemmed in part from shared values of democracy and freedom, values that Lafayette held. I am confident that the administration of President Sarkozy will work earnestly with our leaders and continue in the great tradition of not only a French hero, but a true American hero, Marquis de Lafayette.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 171, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1045

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY TO THE CITIZENS OF GREENSBURG, KANSAS

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 400) expressing the sympathy of the House of Representa-

tives to the citizens of Greensburg, Kansas, over the devastating tornado of May 4, 2007.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 400

Whereas on the evening of Friday, May 4, 2007, a tornado struck the community of Greensburg, Kansas;

Whereas this tornado was classified as an EF-5, the strongest possible type, with winds estimated at 205 miles per hour;

Whereas 9 lives were lost;

Whereas approximately 95 percent of Greensburg was destroyed, causing over 1,500 residents to be displaced from their homes; and

Whereas the strength, courage, and determination of the citizens of Greensburg, Kansas, have been evident following the tornado: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its deepest sympathies to the citizens of Greensburg, Kansas, over the devastation caused by the powerful tornado that struck the community on May 4, 2007; and

(2) expresses its support as the citizens of Greensburg continue their efforts to rebuild their community and their lives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H. Res. 400.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, on May 4, 2007, life in the close-knit community of Greensburg, Kansas, changed forever. At approximately 9:45 p.m. central time, a massive tornado all but destroyed the Kansas town of Greensburg, Kansas, located in south central Kansas, east of Dodge City, Kansas. The tornado was classified as an EF-5, a large and extremely dangerous mile-wide tornado with winds up to 205 miles per hour.

The 20-minute warning time was reasonable, but the tornado was so destructive that nine people in Greensburg unfortunately died, and 95 percent of the town was damaged or destroyed. While the infrastructure damage is crushing, citizens of Greensburg have refused to let this incident crush their spirit, hope and determination. Resilience is the watchword, and rebuilding is the daily driving force.

We're here today as representatives of all the citizens of this great Nation to express our sympathy to the residents of Greensburg for this tragedy of historic proportions. More importantly, we stand in support for the citi-

zens of Greensburg as they heal their families and rebuild their community.

I stand here in support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, to the gentleman from Maryland, I'm very grateful for his support and for his help in bringing this legislation to the House floor today.

I rise in support of H. Res. 400, which I introduced along with my fellow colleagues from Kansas. It does express the sympathy of the House of Representatives for the loss of life and the tremendous property damage to a community in my district of a population of about 1,500.

The tornado occurred at about 10 p.m. on Friday evening, May 4, now a little more than 2 weeks ago. It was an F-5 tornado, one of the most powerful tornados to strike the United States in more than 8 years. It was fortunate that the people of Greensburg had a 20-minute warning, that the National Weather Service performed its function. An emergency was declared, and people had 20 minutes to try to save their families' lives and to move to safety.

My guess is that that 20 minutes went by in a flash. Mr. Speaker, while 20 minutes may go by in a flash, I'm sure that the 2 minutes that the tornado was on the ground went by very, very slowly. It was an eternity. In that 20 minutes of warning, people did what they could do. In that 2 minutes, at least the buildings of the community were destroyed; 205-mile-an-hour winds can do great damage.

Mr. Speaker, we in Kansas are accustomed from time to time to tornados, but never have I seen the devastation and destruction that occurs to one community. The losses are significant. Certainly our prayers and support are with the families of those 10 individuals who died that night, but 95 percent of the town is gone. There is no high school. There is no grade school. There is no city hall. There is no hospital. There is no library. The entire business district, six or seven blocks of a business district in the county seat town, not a business remains.

Sixty-three people were injured, and while faced with such destruction, I've been to Greensburg seven times in the last 2 weeks, I have seen nothing but the sense of spirit about rebuilding lives. You can stand in front of a home that is totally destroyed and listen to the people there sorting through the rubble, trying to find something of value, and when you have a conversation with them, it doesn't take long before a smile appears on their face and they talk about how things could be worse than they are, how we're better off than our neighbors, how we'll get through this.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in what is truly a time of devastation, it's also truly a

time of hope. And what we saw in Kansas that night and every day since reaffirms my belief in the value of caring for your family, love and compassion for your neighbor, that your community matters, and a sense that together we can get through this.

I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to see the tremendous support that comes from across the country. Many Members of the House of Representatives have stopped to visit with me. Many ambassadors and Presidents of foreign countries have sent notes of condolences and concern. And I appreciate that President Bush came to Greensburg, Kansas, last Wednesday and spent 4 hours commiserating with the people of that community.

There is a sense in America that we're all in this together, and in this case the sense is more than just a feeling. It's been a reality.

An example, the nearby community of Haviland, population about 450, the grocery store there was open last Sunday. It's a typical grocery store in a small town. My guess is it makes no money. It's more of a community service than it is a business. It has the old wooden floors and the tin ceiling that is very traditional, very common in communities I represent. And I watched as the owner of the grocery store stood behind the counter, and people brought groceries to the counter and placed them there, ready to pay, and he would ask the question, "Where are you from?" And if the answer was, Greensburg, his answer was, "No charge."

We've seen this exhibited time and time again by friends and family, but even as important as that, we've seen it demonstrated time and time again by people who know no one in Greensburg, Kansas.

So, Mr. Speaker, the tragedy was tremendous, the destruction was great, but in reality, people have the faith in their future and are willing to take the steps necessary to see that their community is rebuilt and that their children and grandchildren have a future in Greensburg.

So, Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution commending these people of Greensburg, Kansas, for their spirit, their bravery, their compassion, their love for friends and family, and I also say thank you to the Members of the House of Representatives and to Americans around the country who also have taken the steps to make sure that good things happen in the future of Greensburg.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Just very briefly before I yield to my good friend Mr. SKELTON, let me just say this, that I was very pleased and very moved by the statement of the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and it reminds me that this country, our influence in the world is largely based on our moral authority, and that

moral authority is one that says that we will leave no American behind.

That's basically what you're saying. It's about the business of all of us lifting each other and being there and underlining under that United States, united.

And so I appreciate what you've said.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to my good friend from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland and compliment him on the wisdom in his reflection of the character of our people of our country. Strength of character is the message today.

I compliment my friend from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) for introducing this legislation. All of us, of course, express sympathy to the people of Greensburg, Kansas. We rise in solidarity, and you are an excellent reflection of the character of those brave and solid people. We thank you for bringing this to our attention.

A community was destroyed by a massive tornado, and those of us from the Midwest are used to severe weather, thunderstorms, winter winds, ice. Weather conditions are just a part of life for us.

In Missouri, tornadoes have been prevalent during my 30 years that I have served here, and, in fact, I was here just a few weeks in May of 1977 when tornadoes ravaged Pleasant Hill and Sedalia, Missouri.

More recently in 2003, the city of Stockton was decimated by a large tornado. The storm damaged or destroyed over 250 homes, killing three residents and injuring numerous others. Since then, the city's been working with residents and both Federal and State authorities to rebuild the downtown and improve upon the public facilities.

As the people of Kansas deal with the aftermath of Mother Nature's fury, we in Missouri stand with our neighbors to the west.

And again, we thank the gentleman from Maryland for his words. We thank the gentleman from Kansas for introducing this resolution.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Beside me I have a photograph of Greensburg, Kansas, taken shortly after the tornado that perhaps gives Members of the House of Representatives and really America a sense of the extent of the destruction.

And there are Members of Congress, I suppose, who come from places different than the middle of America, and let me describe Greensburg, Kansas, to you.

Greensburg, Kansas, is a community of about 1,500 people. It's the county seat town of Kiowa County. It is the hub of activity for that county. It's in many ways a typical community that I represent. Its downtown consists of four or five blocks on both sides of the street of businesses, the hardware store, a drugstore, a grocery store.

There's the seats of government, the city hall, the library, the hospital, the courthouse.

Mr. Speaker, it's a community in which people have lived there, in many instances, for four and five generations, and it's a community that welcomes newcomers. In fact, that's the plea of every Kansas community: We'd like to grow and see some prosperity, see new people in our town.

And so this is a community that has a combination of people who are senior citizens and young folks, a community that has folks who have lived there generation after generation, generally involved in agriculture, farming and ranching; but it's also a community that embraces new ideas and new people, a look toward the future. It's a community that has numerous churches, and yet today, as we talk about Greensburg, those structures, those buildings are gone.

But in many ways, what's happened in Greensburg only reinforces who the people who call Greensburg home are. The fact that the buildings are gone is something they will live with. In fact, their response was how quickly can we get back into town so we can begin the process of rebuilding our homes, our businesses and our lives.

On Saturday, I was in Greensburg for high school graduation. As I indicated, Greensburg is a town of about 1,500 people. Twenty-five seniors from Greensburg High School graduated on Saturday morning. Graduation was held under a tent on the golf course, the golf course because it's the only place in town that has no debris and rubble. Population 1,500, there were 1,800 people at graduation. They were there to tell the students, congratulations and best wishes.

□ 1100

They were also there to reinforce the importance of community, that life revolves around what goes on in the town, and life revolves around its future based upon its young people. Once again we saw the demonstration of how friends and family and neighbors and people who don't even know anybody in Greensburg came together in one more instance to make certain that there was love and compassion and care and concern demonstrated for the people of this community. I am so grateful again for the opportunity to represent the people of a community like Greensburg, Kansas.

The question particularly by the national media has been, Congressman, do you believe they will rebuild their community? I can tell you that effort is ongoing today, and it began on Saturday, Saturday morning the day after the tornado, and it continues each and every moment.

The city administrator, the mayor, the sheriff, the police chief, the county commissioners, the city council members all lost their homes. Yet Saturday morning, they were all gathered there to try to restore the services for electricity and gas and power and water to

the community. They lost everything, but yet, as community leaders, they were there.

My friend, Dennis McKinney, the Democrat leader of the House of Representatives of the State of Kansas, announced on Sunday, a week ago, "I have already hired the contractor to rebuild the house on the same foundation where I lived before the tornado, because leaders have to be leaders." Again, we see the determination of people.

What I answered to the national media who asked me if they think Greensburg will be rebuilt, I don't know a lot of people in other communities, but I know the people of Greensburg, Kansas. In Kansas and in Greensburg, Kansas, we all have a place we love. It's called "home."

There is a great attraction to make certain that we do everything in this Congress, that the Federal Government responds appropriately to help the folks of Greensburg. I can tell you that the love of home is sufficient, that the people of Greensburg, Kansas, are rebuilding today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Again, I want to thank Mr. MORAN for his statements. There was one scene that I am sure most Americans saw on TV. Right after the storm and the tornado, and people were looking through their belongings, there was one lady who said, "You know, if I could just find my wedding ring, if I could just find my wedding ring."

Her house was totally demolished. Apparently she had said that early in the day. Then later in the day, they showed her again, saying, "You won't believe this. I found my wedding ring."

For some reason, that was a very telling statement on her part, because what she was basically saying is that while the buildings may fall, while so much may seem so dim, the fact is that I still have family. I want that wedding ring, that band, that symbol of unity, that symbol of togetherness, that symbol of generations yet unborn, and those who have come before me; that's what I am looking for.

Just as she found her wedding ring, I know the citizens of Greensburg will make it. Just as Mr. MORAN said, they will rebuild.

Then there was another scene, just yesterday on the news, where the commentators were talking about how a bank or two had kind of a temporary building, and other buildings were slowly coming up just to keep things rolling and doing business. Then to hear about the graduation of 25 students and 1,800 guests appearing, I think that sends a very powerful message to our Nation, and such a powerful message to so many people.

Throughout life, we all fall down, but the question is whether we will get up. I think that as people watch the citizens of Greensburg, they realize that

there will always, in the words of Martin Luther King, be interruptions in our lives. The question is whether we will continue our lives after the interruptions.

On behalf of all of our Members, and I know there will be a unanimous vote from all of our Members, we want to say to the citizens of Greensburg that we stand with you, that our prayers are with you, and just know that as we remind you, God holds you in the palm of His hand.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I thank the gentleman from Maryland. He has touched me by his personal interest, not only in this resolution, but in his awareness and concern for the people of Greensburg, Kansas.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it's good to see in this House of Representatives where people from across the country recognize the value of working together to see that good happens.

I also wish to express my appreciation to all the volunteers from across the country. Sunday, the two Sundays since the tornado, collection plates have been passed in our churches, the prayers have been said. The Red Cross has arrived, the Salvation Army is there, the National Guard, our soldiers away from home, again, helping in time of need. Our law enforcement officers from across the State and FEMA have performed admirably in this very difficult circumstance.

I am pleased by the spirit exhibited today by the gentleman from Maryland and look forward to that spirit continuing as we work to rebuild Greensburg and all of America.

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I hope that many people from Greensburg observe this small session that we are going through right now. I hope that they know that we are with them.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 400, which expresses the sympathy of the House of Representatives to the citizens of Greensburg, KS, over the devastating tornado of May 4, 2007.

Just over 2 weeks ago, a devastating week-end of storms left at least 9 people dead and much of the farm town of Greensburg, KS, destroyed. Mile-wide tornadoes with winds of up to 205 miles per hour were recorded, leveling the town and destroying much of the equipment used by first-responders, including city and county trucks. By the time the winds finally settled, approximately 95 percent had been destroyed, displacing over 1,500 residents from their homes.

The tragedy of this storm was compounded by the lack of available responders and equipment. Governor Kathleen Sebelius has lamented the deployment of much needed troops and resources to Iraq, stating "When the troops get deployed, the equipment goes with them. So here in Kansas about 50 percent of our trucks are gone. We need trucks.

We are missing Humvees, we're missing all kinds of equipment that could help us respond in this kind of emergency."

This storm illustrated precisely how rescue and recovery efforts here at home are being severely hampered by our ongoing involvement in Iraq. National Guard representatives have echoed this statement, with MG. Tod Bunting of the Kansas National Guard noting that first-responders lacked resources even before the war, which has subsequently "further depleted us."

Despite these shortages, Guard troops are to be commended for their efforts at providing much needed security and supplies.

Here in Congress, as hurricane season rapidly approaches, we are actively examining our Nation's response to natural disasters. Two years ago we learned, from Hurricane Katrina, the extent to which we were unprepared for, and unable to adequately respond to, a disaster of this magnitude.

I urge this Congress to continue to pursue this important issue; the tornadoes in Kansas serve to remind us all that nature's furies are varied and unpredictable.

Mr. Speaker, Greensburg, KS, remains in shambles. Homes are demolished, livelihoods lost, lives interrupted. I would like to join my colleague, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, the sponsor of this bill, in expressing my deep personal sympathy to the victims of this natural disaster. Similarly, I would like to express my strong support for this resolution, and I would urge my colleagues to do likewise.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 400.

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.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 413) recognizing the service of United States Merchant Marine Veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

Whereas the United States Merchant Marine served as the Nation's first Navy and helped George Washington's Continental Army defeat the British Navy;

Whereas since 1775, United States Merchant Mariners have served valiantly in times of peace and in every war;

Whereas after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, 29 United States Merchant Marine Academy cadets operated a fleet of boats in New York Harbor, transporting firefighters and other emergency equipment workers, medical supplies, and food;

Whereas today, more than 8,000 Merchant Mariners serve in the Military Sealift Command, most of them working in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom;