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## BIG OIL COMPANIES LOOTING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before when I reserved my right to object, I think that this debate should have been going on before we passed the bill, not after we passed the bill. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this, but this should have been part of the debate.

Mr. Speaker, there is looting going on. We know there is looting going on. You can turn on your television and see looting going on. But the real looting that is going on is the looting of the big oil companies, looting the American public, picking the pockets of the American public.

It is unconscionable that gasoline prices in a matter of days have been spiked 30 to 50 cents a gallon. This is price gouging on the part of the oil companies. There is no way that the disaster in the Gulf States could have been reflected so quickly with an upswing of prices at the pump. There is no way, except for greed and price gouging.

Big oil companies should stop the looting of the American people. When the price of a barrel of oil goes down, it takes a month or two to be reflected at the pump. Why, then, is it quite the opposite when disaster hits? Why is there an immediate increase in the price of gasoline?

How dare the oil companies use this disaster to line their pockets. How dare the oil companies use this tragedy to get richer and to stick it to the American people. The American people demand answers and want to know why they are being forced to pay so much for gasoline.

This Congress and the President should do everything possible to bring down the cost of gasoline. If it means releasing the strategic reserves, as I have been calling for for months and the President says he will do, we should do that, and then some; and we should call on the oil companies to put back some of their profits into helping the American people bring down the cost of gasoline.

Now, of course, I support this legislation. Of course, we must help the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. As a New Yorker, I am appreciative of how the country responded after September 11. We need that kind of response today.

Why were these things not in place before the hurricane happened? We knew the hurricane was going to happen. Why did we not have food and clothes and water and all kinds of things for the people? Why is it still, days and days later, taking time to evacuate people? Why are there dead bodies floating around? What is the administration doing about this? Govern-

ment has dropped the ball and heads should roll, quite frankly, because it is unconscionable that we are standing by and not responding properly or effectively enough.

I flew over the tsunami. I flew over Indonesia and I saw the devastation there. It is one thing to have devastation in a Third World country, as terrible as it is; but in the United States of America in the 21st century, days later, for people to be there stranded without water and food and shelter, it is unconscionable.

Again, how dare the oil companies take advantage of this and raise the price of a gallon of gasoline so that the American people during Labor Day and after are suffering. It is shameful that they are using people's misery in three States to line their pockets and spike the price of gasoline for the entire American public.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue involves us weaning ourselves off foreign oil. Local gas stations in New York and elsewhere and in places outside of the Gulf Coast supply lines have gasoline. Their suppliers and shippers have gasoline. So why are prices going up so much?

Again, it is simply price gouging by the giant oil companies. I realize that gasoline is priced on a futures market and that gas prices today reflect what is expected in the future. But it is bad enough that this Congress passed an energy bill several weeks ago that did nothing to help the American people in terms of bringing down the price of gasoline. So now Congress has a challenge not only to help the victims of Katrina, but to help the American people with this spike in gasoline prices.

For years I have been talking about the need to wean ourselves off oil because we have to rely on the sheikdoms that are either unstable, unfriendly to the U.S. or even supporters of terrorism.

Now we have another reason to wean ourselves off foreign oil. So much of our economy is based on oil, and when Mother Nature gets grumpy, it sends us into a tailspin; and the oil companies use the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of hurricane survivors as cover to extract more profit from our constituents.

This cannot stand. We need to improve the fuel economy of passenger cars and SUVs to a level our advanced technology makes possible, not issue CAFE standards, as the administration did last week, which do nothing to improve fuel efficiency.

We need to make America the world's leader in energy technologies, not rely on the inefficiencies of the past. We can do this. I am currently forming a bipartisan Oil and National Security Caucus to highlight the danger of our over-reliance on oil.

But in the end we will never end our addiction to oil and never break the grip of the oil companies unless we act now. So I call on this Congress to come up with solutions which are already

there to wean us off foreign oil, and I believe that this Congress needs to take action now.

Now, provisions and assistance should have been on the ready, as I mentioned before, so that as soon as this storm moved on, the food, water, medical supplies and personnel, military and civilian, would be on their way. We must not ignore the mistakes that have been made. We must fix them immediately and learn from them for the future. We must help the people immediately.

Let me finally say that the priority of this Congress and this administration has been tax cuts, tax cuts and tax cuts; and this is a result of it. We do not put the money where we need to put the money. We do not put the money into infrastructure. We do not do the kinds of things to prevent disasters from happening again.

Priorities cannot only be tax cuts and war; priorities must be helping the American people, first in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, and then taking strong steps to wean us off foreign oil.

## EXPRESSING SORROW TO VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join all Americans in expressing our great sorrow for those who have lost loved ones in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and our outrage for those still suffering in the South. This is a real crisis, and Americans are in need. These people, many of whom are most vulnerable, have lost everything. Now they are losing hope.

President Bush has called the response "not acceptable." This must change now. It is not about Democrats or Republicans; it is about helping our fellow Americans in their darkest hour. This is not the time for excuses or blame. Our country has the means to rescue and care for these people; and we must do it quickly, before more lives are lost.

First, we need to address their very basic needs. We need to get food, water, and medical supplies to the thousands of people desperately waiting for it at shelters like the Superdome and the convention center in New Orleans. Rescue workers also need to get a handle on who is trying to survive out on their own in flooded areas across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. We need to send out the National Guard and local police in skiffs, boats and helicopters to locate these people, street by street and house by house, rescue them and bring them to a safe location where supplies are waiting for them and reconnect them with their loved ones. One national database needs to be set up for family members searching for survivors once they have been brought to safety.

But before we need to do that, we must set up a central command center to coordinate the response from top to bottom. One of the many complaints that we have heard is that no one is in charge. We need someone leading the recovery efforts, calling the shots and directing the resources where they are needed most. We are now a Nation at war with time, and we need a real war room to ensure these people survive.

Another complaint we hear often is a lack of communication. There is no power, so TVs and radios do not work and cell phone communication is sketchy at best.

Today, almost 5 days after Hurricane Katrina rocked the Gulf Coast, people still have no idea what to do. First responders need good information to tell people where to go for help. Rescue workers need the Federal Government to pitch in and give them the communication and technology necessary to coordinate their efforts.

Finally, law and order must be restored. People in these flood-ravaged areas are homeless, scared and desperate. Some have crossed the line and turned to violence. The National Guard needs to move in immediately in massive numbers to restore peace and stability along with local law enforcement.

This is all on the short term. In the long term, these hurricane victims need somewhere to go until their towns and cities can be rebuilt. The Federal Government needs to consider opening up military bases across the country so families can live there until they are put back in their homes or put back in their own lives. Every State in the country should consider taking a certain number of families and housing them in their State so everyone can pitch in.

Finally, once we have done all of this, we must evaluate what was done wrong and what was done right. We must learn from this experience so that we can better respond the next time.

In closing, I know there are many inspiring stories that are not being told, the massive efforts of the Coast Guard to rescue everyone they could and other individuals out there who have put their lives on the line to help and save other people, the neighbors helping neighbors make it through the worst natural disaster many have ever seen. Those are not the stories that are making the evening news.

But I know the true value of the American spirit. In these dark times, I know these communities will be rebuilt, and these families, these cities and towns and this Nation will persevere.

#### HELPING THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon in support of the supplemental appropriation. It is with great sadness that we are being called upon today to address this issue.

Let me begin my remarks by first commending those great Americans who are engaged in the rescue efforts down in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. They are great Americans.

This tragedy today brings back unpleasant memories. It was my district in eastern North Carolina that was devastated in 1999 by Hurricane Floyd; and so we know so well, so well, the pain of those people who are displaced. So on behalf of the people of the First Congressional District of North Carolina, we offer our prayers and sincere concern for their welfare.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the absence of an adequate plan to cope with the damage done by this hurricane. Hurricane Katrina has triggered a nightmare, a nightmare, for thousands of our citizens. Many thousands at this very moment are in harm's way. They are displaced, they are hungry, they need medical assistance. They need every resource that this government has available, and that includes FEMA's assistance, transportation and housing assistance from the military and other humanitarian assistance.

These displaced families must be extricated from the danger that surrounds them; and we have the capacity, we have the capacity to do it, and we must accelerate our efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that several military bases are willing and able to provide immediate housing for these victims. Space is available. There is substantial housing resources on our bases, and we must use them. As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I encourage us to use our military resources to the fullest.

There are many, many communities across the South and across this country who are eager to provide housing and health care and education for these victims. In Columbia, South Carolina, for example, those great Americans want to care for these victims; and they are conferencing right now with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

In my State of North Carolina, Laurinburg Institute is eager to provide space and educational opportunities for up to 200 school-age children. We must begin to move these families to loving American communities.

Mr. Speaker, we must also protect communities. We must protect communities who open their resources to displaced families. We must guarantee to them that the cost of care for these families will be provided. We must also guarantee that they will not incur any legal liability as a result of their efforts.

So I want to encourage FEMA to quickly secure trailer homes needed for temporary housing. My constituents in

1999 were required to wait, in our opinion, an unreasonable time before trailers were erected. I know it cannot be done with the snap of a finger, but the process must be expedited. FEMA must execute a comprehensive plan that will not result in the dumping of these displaced families when the FEMA specialists complete their work. This was a problem in 1999. These specialists must provide one message, and they must stay on site until every issue is resolved.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that the Federal Government provide full financial assistance to these displaced families, and that includes housing and health care for those who choose to decline FEMA housing and elect to stay with their family and their friends. They too, they too deserve an assistance stipend.

The distinguished gentleman from California, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, stated a few minutes ago, actually it was a couple of hours ago now, that money will not make the difference in the final analysis. Well, I understand the import of that statement, but I want to emphasize that adequate money resources will make life better, will make life better for these Americans. We should not suggest otherwise.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Federal Government does not and cannot act with precision in these types of disasters, but we must insist that FEMA and the military and the National Guard and other rescue efforts engage in coordinated efforts, and we must provide the resources.

I applaud and support the minority leader's suggestion of a select hurricane task force. I support the idea.

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#### REBUILDING COMMUNITIES DEVASTATED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the emergency supplemental appropriations for hurricane disaster relief. The \$10.5 billion that we have acted upon today will be a downpayment, and we must recognize it as such, a downpayment on a much longer-term investment that we will have to make to restore the communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

I commend the leadership, majority and minority, of both the House and the Senate, for this timely response, as we did in reacting to the attacks of September 11, 2001. I especially appreciate the persistence of our minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), in pressing for action by Congress this week, not waiting until after return from the Labor Day recess.