

Ava Gardner lived the American Dream but never forgot her humble beginnings in Johnston County, her high school days at Rock Ridge or her days at Atlantic Christian College. Ava Gardner's career spanned five decades, and she was America's sweetheart during Hollywood's Golden Age.

This small town girl was a big time celebrity. In fact, she was the first woman from North Carolina to grace the cover of Time Magazine. She was also a patriot who performed for our servicemen and a tireless leader in the fight against cancer.

Ava represents the can-do attitude and patriotism embodied by the people of Smithfield and Johnston County. At the request of the Mayor and Town Council of Smithfield, I was pleased to introduce this legislation in July and work for its passage.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3439 and honor a famous North Carolinian.

Mr. DUNCAN. 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 Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3439.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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HURRICANE KATRINA EMERGENCY HOUSING ACT OF 2005

Mr. BAKER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3894) to provide for waivers under certain housing assistance programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina in obtaining housing, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3894

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Hurricane Katrina Emergency Housing Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. WAIVERS FOR SECTION 8 VOUCHER PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the "Secretary") may, for all or any part of the period specified under subsection (c), waive any of the requirements described in subsection (b) in the connection with the provision of assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) on behalf of an individual or family if—

(1) the individual or family—

(A) resides or resided, on August 25, 2005, in any area that is subject to a declaration by the President of a major disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) in connection with Hurricane Katrina; or

(B) resides or resided, on September 24, 2005, in any area that is subject to a declaration by the President of a major disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act

(42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) in connection with Hurricane Rita;

(2) the residence of the individual or family became uninhabitable or inaccessible as result of such major disaster or emergency; and

(3) as of the date referred to in paragraph (1), as applicable, rental assistance under such section 8(o) was provided on behalf of such individual or family.

(b) WAIVER OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements described in this subsection are the requirements under—

(1) paragraph (2) of section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(2)), relating to tenant contributions towards rent, except that any such waiver shall expire on an individual's return to work;

(2) paragraph (4) of such section 8(o), relating to the eligibility of individuals to receive assistance;

(3) subsection (k) of such section 8 and paragraph (5) of such section 8(o), relating to verification of income;

(4) paragraph (7)(A) of such section 8(o), relating to the requirement that leases shall be for a term of 1 year;

(5) paragraph (8) of such section 8(o), relating to initial inspection of housing units by a public housing agency;

(6) subsection (r)(1)(B) of such section 8, relating to restrictions on portability;

(7) any regulation, notice, or order requiring prior approval by the Secretary with respect to any addendum to the model lease that permits lease terminations in the event that a tenant—

(A) was not eligible for assistance at the time of lease approval;

(B) would not have been eligible for assistance if a criminal background check had been completed prior to lease approval; or

(C) would not have met that landlord's screening criteria with respect to rent or credit history if a full a screening had been completed prior to lease approval; and

(8) any regulation or Executive Order providing for access to Federally funded programs by eligible persons having limited English proficiency.

(c) TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.—The period specified under this subsection is the 12-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act., unless before the expiration of the 6-month period beginning on such date of enactment the Secretary makes a determination that waivers under this section are no longer needed, in which case the period specified under this subsection is the 6-month period beginning on such date of enactment.

SEC. 3. AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY TO DIRECTLY ADMINISTER VOUCHERS WHEN PHAS ARE UNABLE TO DO SO.

If the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development determines that a public housing agency is unable to implement the provisions of subsection (o) of section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) or section 2 of this Act due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita, the Secretary may—

(1) directly administer any voucher program described in such subsection or in section 2 of this Act; and

(2) perform the functions assigned to a public housing agency by such subsection or section 2 of this Act.

SEC. 4. WAIVERS FOR PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8 TO FACILITATE HOUSING OF AFFECTED FAMILIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—For all or part of the period specified under subsection (c), the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the "Secretary") may waive the applicability of any of the requirements described subsection (b)

with respect to any housing provided project-based assistance under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) for any individual or family that meets the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 2(a) of this Act.

(b) PROVISIONS WAIVED.—The requirements described in this subsection are—

(1) section 3(a) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(a)), relating to tenant contributions towards rent, except that any such waiver shall expire on an individual's return to work;

(2) section 8(k) of such Act, relating to verification of income;

(3) section 8(d)(1)(B)(i) of such Act, relating to the requirement that leases shall be for a term of 1 year;

(4) any requirement relating to initial inspection of housing units by a public housing agency;

(5) any regulation, notice, or order requiring prior approval by the Secretary with respect to any addendum to the model lease that permits lease terminations in the event that a tenant—

(A) was not eligible for assistance at the time of lease approval;

(B) would not have been eligible for assistance if a criminal background check had been completed prior to lease approval; or

(C) would not have met that landlord's screening criteria with respect to rent or credit history if a full a screening had been completed prior to lease approval; and

(6) any regulation or Executive Order providing for access to Federally funded programs by eligible persons having limited English proficiency.

(c) TERMINATION.—The period specified under this subsection is the 12-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act., unless before the expiration of the 6-month period beginning on such date of enactment the Secretary makes a determination that waivers under this section are no longer needed, in which case the period specified under this subsection is the 6-month period beginning on such date of enactment.

SEC. 5. PRESERVATION OF PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8 HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS CONTRACTS FOR DAMAGED OR DESTROYED HOUSING UNITS.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a project-based housing assistance payments contract entered into pursuant to section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) covering a project damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita shall not expire or be terminated because of the damage or destruction of dwelling units in the project. The expiration date of the contract shall be deemed to be the later of the date specified in the contract or a date ending three months after the units are first made habitable.

SEC. 6. REPORT ON INVENTORY OF AVAILABILITY OF FACILITIES AND PROPERTIES FOR HOUSING USE.

(a) COMPILING OF INVENTORY.—Not later than 20 days after the date of the enactment of this Act—

(1) the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and such other agency heads as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development determines appropriate, and the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, shall compile an inventory of Federal civilian and defense facilities (or, in the case of the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, properties held by such entities) that—

(A) identifies such facilities and properties that can be used—

(i) to provide emergency housing;
 (ii) as locations for the construction or deployment of temporary housing units; or
 (iii) to provide permanent housing; and
 (B) for each such facility and property included, identifies the appropriate use or uses under clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (A); and

(2) each such agency head and entity shall submit the inventory compiled pursuant to paragraph (1) to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall compile and submit to the Congress an aggregate inventory comprised of the inventory compiled by the Secretary pursuant to subsection (a) and all the inventories submitted to the Secretary pursuant to such subsection.

SEC. 7. GAO REPORT ON STATE EMERGENCY HOUSING PLANS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report to the Congress—

(1) identifying any States that have developed emergency housing contingency plans for use in the event of a disaster;

(2) describing such plans; and

(3) assessing the effectiveness of such plans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER).

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3894, Hurricane Katrina Emergency Housing Act of 2005. The legislation authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to waive several limitations on the rental voucher programs. These waivers will allow us to help families who have been displaced by the hurricanes to move quickly to secure shelter they so desperately need.

Having a roof over your head is one of the most basic human needs. In the aftermath of the storms, Federal and local governments now face the monumental task of coordinating the relocation of thousands upon thousands of individuals across the entire Nation.

This legislation will assist those displaced individuals and families who are already receiving assistance under section 8 to quickly find housing, and I wish to reiterate the point: this assistance being modified is for those currently qualified to receive section 8 assistance. Under the bill, HUD is given the statutory authority to waive the section 8 voucher eligibility requirements for a period not to exceed 1 year. Specifically, HUD is given the authority to waive tenant contributions toward rent eligibility of individuals to receive assistance, income verification, 1-year lease term, initial inspections of housing units, portability restrictions, model leasing, and English proficiency regulations.

This bill provides similar waivers for the project-based section 8 program with the exception of eligibility of individuals to receive assistance.

In addition, H.R. 3894 includes a provision to preserve existing project-based section 8 housing assistance payments contracts for those who were either damaged or destroyed due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In an effort to better address the needs of individuals and families displaced by the storms, DOD, HUD, Veterans Affairs, and government-sponsored enterprises are instructed to compile a list of Federal, civilian, and defense facilities that can be used as temporary housing, as locations to construct or deploy temporary housing or provide permanent housing. This information is to be coordinated by HUD within 30 days of enactment of the bill, and the Secretary of HUD is required to report to the Congress accordingly. GAO is also instructed to conduct a study of State emergency plans to assess their effectiveness.

I would also want to speak to the role of the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ALEXANDER), who has worked tirelessly on this important legislation, is the principal author of the measure, and with his assistance brings it to the floor for consideration of the bill.

I would urge my colleagues to support final passage.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, a little over a month ago, the gulf coast region was struck with one of the worst natural disasters ever to fall upon this country, Hurricane Katrina followed by Hurricane Rita.

In its wake, Katrina left hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed, over 1 million citizens displaced, and countless families separated.

Madam Speaker, after the hurricane, hundreds of thousands of people were forced into churches, armories, hotels, community centers, Red Cross-managed shelters, the Cajun Dome, the Superdome, the Astrodome and on and on and on. Almost 5 weeks after Katrina, more than 100,000 people are still living in shelters, over 442,000 more in hotels, 4,600 on cruise ships, and untold others are camping out.

Now, certainly shelters are a short-term solution. None of us can be satisfied with what we have accomplished to date. We are failing to manage a credible program to house these hurricane victims. We can do better than that.

We in the Congress of the United States as public policy-makers have a responsibility to these victims to provide swift and targeted resources in order to assist in the reconstruction of homes, communities, and cities.

Today, we have three Katrina-related housing bills on the suspension calendar. None of them are adequate to do

what needs to be done to get people out of shelters, to get people into viable temporary housing, or to rebuild the housing that has been lost in the gulf region.

H.R. 3894 provides temporary waivers for several bureaucratic provisions within the section 8 housing program, but it does nothing in the way of adding new vouchers or addressing the immediate need for housing construction in the affected areas; nor does this bill attempt to address the existing affordable housing crisis in other parts of the country, especially those cities providing shelter for the evacuees.

Madam Speaker, instead of providing additional resources to programs which we know work and which we know have the infrastructure to provide immediate relief and assistance to those most in need, we have again left the door open for another blank check to be written by FEMA.

This bill is a bill that would allow for an expedited process within the section 8 housing program. It will waive several requirements for what have been described as cumbersome roadblocks to housing section 8 voucher holders, such as income verification, tenant contributions, and initial inspections.

These things are helping, and of course, I am going to support the bill; but what I am really concerned about is all of those persons who were on the waiting list for vouchers, who are already eligible, even if they are given some temporary assistance from FEMA, even if they got it for 18 months, what happens then. They still need housing. They still are, what, on the waiting list?

It is all right to waive some of these bureaucratic rules, but this is the time that we should be thinking about what we can do about homelessness. That is not even addressed here. This simply says, if you had a section 8 voucher, we will replace it and we will make it a little bit easier for you. It does not talk about the homeless people who were not even in the system, nor does it talk about those who are on the waiting list.

There is an article that I would like to just read verbatim because I think it describes the mess that we are in; and while I do this, I am not placing blame on my friends on the opposite side of the aisle. Even though I am very concerned that we were so slow in getting to the floor with even this legislation that does not do a lot, I am really concerned that we did not take this as an opportunity to really deal with the housing crisis in the gulf as it is a housing crisis all over the country.

This is an article that I am just going to read because I think it sums it up very well: "Housing Promises to Evacuees Have Fallen Short." It is a Washington Post article that was written just a few days ago, 10/2/2005, by Spencer S. Hsu and Elizabeth Williamson:

"Red Cross to Halt Hotel Stipends in 2 weeks, and Hundreds of Shelters Have

Closed." Well, what is important about this is the President of the United States said he wanted everybody out of the shelters by October 15. That deadline is not going to be met.

"Two weeks before President Bush's mid-October goal for moving Hurricane Katrina victims out of shelters, more than 100,000 people still reside in such makeshift housing, and 400,000 more are in hotel rooms costing up to \$100 a night. Housing options promised by the Federal Government a month ago have largely failed to materialize. Cruise ships and trailer parks have so far proved in large part to be unworkable, while an American Red Cross program, paid for by the Federal Government that allows storm victims to stay in motels or hotels is scheduled to expire October 15.

"It is projected to cost the Federal Emergency Management Agency as much as \$168 million. Federal officials are struggling to launch an alternative interim housing program that would give families whose homes are destroyed or uninhabitable a lump sum of \$2,358 in rental assistance, or \$786 a month for 3 months, with the possibility of a 15-month extension.

"So far, 330,000 families have signed up for the housing assistance. But if evacuees have to use those stipends to pay for hotel rooms when FEMA stops covering such lodging, the funds will not last long. Last week, the number of evacuees in hotels increased from 220,000 to more than 400,000 people in 140,000 rooms. Many have no idea what they will do when the program ends in 2 weeks." No idea.

And they talk about this one man, whose case I am just going to read from this article: "Ronnie Ashworth, a truck driver from Chalmette, Louisiana, east of New Orleans, currently lives at the Baton Rouge Marriott. If no other housing is forthcoming after October 15, 'I'll be sleeping in the back of my truck,' Ashworth, 60, said. 'I have no funds right now.'

"Red Cross spokeswoman Carrie Martin said, 'We're administering the hotel program with the expectation that it ends on October 15. After that, we'll still have shelters open, but we definitely don't want to move backwards.' Meanwhile, more than 100,000 people remain in about 1,000 shelters operated by the Red Cross, smaller charities and churches, scattered across two dozen States as far flung as New York and Washington."

I am going to discontinue reading this article because I think my colleagues get the picture, and I think we are all desirous of doing something substantial. But how long has it taken us to get to the floor with this minimal response to the housing problems of the victims of Hurricane Katrina and now Rita?

Madam Speaker, I think we can do better than this, and we should be on this floor today not only talking about vouchers simply for those who held vouchers before; but we should be talk-

ing about those people who were waiting for vouchers. We should be talking about how we are going to build permanent low- and moderate-income housing. Right now we are failing.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I would just like to state that I agree with much of what the gentlewoman had to offer to the House in her comments with regard to long-term and permanent assistance for those displaced by the storms.

I certainly believe that people should be given the ability to make the best choices for their families, take vouchers, and move wherever it suits their family's need close to employment, close to job training, whatever suits their circumstance best.

Unfortunately, we in Louisiana who feel that way have had a different path outlined by our Governor. I read her most recent comment: "The path I have outlined, moving our people from shelters or the homes of in-laws or friends or into hotels and transitional trailer communities here in Louisiana, gives our people hope. It gives them a clear path that they can see, a path that will help them get their lives together and get them home to Louisiana."

I do not necessarily share that perspective. I think we should be doing the highest and best job with the limited resources that are available to us, and I agree with the gentlewoman that we should be doing something on a grander scale. The bills before the House today are merely modest steps. They are significant progress, but we need to do better.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ALEXANDER), the principal sponsor of the bill.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, to begin with I want to thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) for his leadership and his contribution to the State of Louisiana, both with the Committee on Financial Services and within our delegation.

Because of the hurricanes in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, over 1 million households have been affected. Between 40 and 50 percent of those households, whether rented or owned, will need to be completely replaced. These are high numbers and do not even include Katrina's damage in Florida. In fact, FEMA estimates that 300,000 families are homeless and 200,000 will require government housing.

This is a housing crisis unlike anything we have seen in this country due to a natural disaster. Here in the United States, a country that gives more in aid to countries around the world than any other, we have largely been unable to provide the basic need of housing for our citizens.

Today is the 36th day since Hurricane Katrina made landfall, and there are still thousands of Louisianans in shelters across this country and the State of Louisiana.

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These numbers do not even reflect the number of people living in private homes, in churches and motels.

For 36 days now, these people have slept on cots. They have eaten at community tables and showered in communal facilities. These people, the citizens of our country, want their privacy. They want to use the phone at will. They want to sleep in their own beds. They want to have the freedom to walk around without carrying their belongings, and they want to tuck their children into bed at night in peace and not have strangers watching them. In this country of great prosperity and resources, people should not be forced to live like this for over a month.

This act will give the Secretary of HUD the authority to waive specific requirements under section 8 and project-based assistance programs for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in order to expedite emergency housing assistance to those families that need it the most. This waiver authority will last for a period of 6 months, with a 6-month extension beyond that if the Secretary deems it necessary.

By waiving the requirements of verification of income and initial inspection of units, we are enabling displaced persons who have lost documentation due to the hurricanes to obtain vouchers and ensuring occupancy immediately by waiving the initial inspections.

By removing the 1-year rental contract requirement that the vouchers be confined to a specific area, we are making sure that people have the flexibility to determine where and how they will live. While many people are deciding what to do on a permanent basis, they still need temporary but independent living arrangements. This bill does just that.

This bill authorizes the Secretary to directly administer section 8 vouchers if the appropriate housing agency is unable to do so because of damage or displaced employees due to the hurricanes. This will ensure that those persons traditionally served will continue to be served by HUD's programs.

This bill requires the Secretary to report to Congress within 30 days of the enactment of this legislation on Federal, civilian and Defense facilities that can be used to provide emergency housing or as locations for construction or deployment of temporary housing units.

Lastly, it requires the Comptroller General to submit a report to Congress identifying and describing States that have developed emergency housing contingency plans for use in the event of a disaster to help us be better prepared the next time.

While I recognize that this is not all that is needed to address the housing

crisis, this is a step in the right direction and part of the overall plan to get people into more permanent living arrangements. We cannot solely rely on the trailer plan to house displaced persons. These vouchers offer choice to people, use existing housing and do not necessitate the need to build additional public housing.

I am concerned for the people of my State. I am concerned for the people of the gulf coast region. It is time for us to take action to get these people out of the shelters and into apartments, into homes or into a place where they can begin to start their lives over. These are Americans. They are our citizens. I urge my colleagues to help pass H.R. 3894. It is time that we act to get our citizens out of these shelters and into homes.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for yielding me this time. She is the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity and has been playing a very leading role, not just now but for years, on housing issues, and I fully subscribe to her really very forceful and eloquent description of where we are.

Let me take up where she left off. I am going to vote for this bill. It is later than we would like. It is less, in some ways, than we like, but everything it does do, it seems to me, is useful. And I want to express my appreciation to the Members on the other side who had, I believe, a role in making sure of this.

There was some original fear that the housing vouchers or the equivalence of vouchers which will be funded out of FEMA would somehow be competing with the existing voucher program. Several of my colleagues told me that they had heard from housing authorities in their areas, in other parts of the country that they were being told, Okay, here come these FEMA people, they go to the head of the list, and they would in effect take a voucher away where there are waiting lists.

Let us be clear that that is not happening. These are additives. These are additional. So it is very important to note that, because as the gentlewoman from California noted, we have waiting lists. We have an ongoing problem, and this does not make it any worse, but it does not make it any better. But let us be clear, it does not make it worse. So anyone who was under that misimpression, we had a briefing, and I appreciate the majority facilitating this, and staff from both sides and Members were there, and FEMA and HUD both made it very explicit to us that these are additional to the voucher program. So no one should feel they are going to be competing with someone already there.

The next question, though, is, what do we do next? Yes, it is important to get people the vouchers, but they are a short-term solution by definition: 6 months and 6 months. We hope people will be able to find some alternatives. But what do we do? That is the point I want to address, because this underlines the need for us to get back in the business of helping construct on a permanent basis new affordable housing.

We made great mistakes as a society decades ago by building for low-income people Columbia Point or Pruitt Igoe or Cabrini Green, large sterile warehouses for far too many people with far too few services, and they did not work well, and not because of any character defect in the people that lived there but because of the inherent flaw in the way they were planned. We have learned since then how to use public money to build housing that is desirable; how, in particular, to use public money in conjunction with private developers, profit-making and nonprofit, to provide decent homes.

There has been a lot of concern here about making sure that faith-based organizations are allowed to participate in government programs. Well, in the housing area, there is nothing new about that. Faith-based organizations for years have been the leaders in using Federal programs to provide affordable housing. In my own State of Massachusetts, the Boston Archdiocese and Office of Urban Planning has been a superb provider of affordable housing. So has the Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly. If you talk to the Association of Homes for the Aging, religious entities are very much involved.

I would note that none of them ever told me that they had to discriminate in hiring to provide that housing. But what we should be doing is taking advantage of that experience and broadening it, because we have got to the point where the only housing that has been built has been for older people. And that is important, building housing for the elderly and the disabled, but as we now see, we also need some family housing.

Here is the problem: If all we do is what we are doing today, and what we are doing today is important and I am for it, but if this is all we do, a year from now, where will these people live? Because there is not this great excess of affordable residential units all over the country. There are pockets where there are.

We also have the question about what happens in New Orleans and other areas. Now, I was very distressed to hear the Secretary of HUD say; not surprised, I must add but distressed, that when New Orleans is rebuilt, there will be fewer African-Americans there. Shame on us if that is the result because, where are these people supposed to go? This was their home. This was a community. And we should be providing temporary help, but we should also be determined to allow this community to rebuild itself.

That does not mean building inadequate housing in the middle of a floodplain. It does not mean having people be vulnerable to floods. It means we should use our wit and our resources to provide replacement housing for people that is better and safer and protected. We know how to do that.

So as I support this bill today, I want to reaffirm, and I know the gentlewoman from California has been a leader on this, and I want to acknowledge that the gentleman from Louisiana, who is managing this bill, he and I and others on our committee are working on one piece of legislation that might be a vehicle for this, that there are many ways to do it. But I want to stress the importance of, after the vouchers, then what?

If we want to allow people to move back not just to New Orleans but to the Mississippi gulf and other communities, then we, in part, should be building housing. There are other things we need to today, and our committee is working on that and working with the financial community.

And in this context, I really have to express my great disappointment here in the President's approach. When the President gave his major speech not for the interim but for the longer-term situation, the only housing situation he addressed was the homeownership through an urban homesteading plan. Now, homesteading has a great history in the United States. And in the 19th century, people were given a piece of land out in the unsettled parts of the country, and they could chop down trees, and they could build their houses. I do not think that model translates all that well to an urban area.

I do not think, when the people in New Orleans are given a piece of land, which is what the President's program says, I will give you the land but nothing else, even if there were any trees left after the flood, I do not think the average returning resident of New Orleans will be able to chop them down and build a house. The urban homesteading plan is wholly inadequate. By definition, the President's urban homesteading plan helps a very small percentage of those who need the help. He is having a lottery.

Since when for a program to meet basic human needs do you have a lottery, which by definition means a very small percentage of the people get in there? Just look at the inadequacy of that program. It says the Federal Government will try to find property it owns. It will not be based on suitability about where to build. It will be on what the Federal Government owns and has no use for and then will be made available to a small percentage of people. And then they are on their own and have to find somehow some money to build on it or to rehabilitate it. That just does not make sense.

What we need to do, following on from this, is a sensible housing production program working with the local

officials in New Orleans and in the gulf and elsewhere, the gulf of Mississippi and elsewhere. Let sensible planning go forward at the local level, building not large sterile public housing units but mixed housing, because people with various incomes will need help, and various forms of help will be necessary.

For some people, because we want to promote home ownership, various forms of mortgage assistance will make sense, so working with the financial institutions. For others, we will need to build some housing. We also, I think, have an obligation to rebuild the public housing units that were destroyed, not exactly as they were. We have had some experience, and our committee has in general voted often to reauthorize the HOPE 6 program, which is a way to take public housing and improve it.

So, yes, I vote for this bill. I also welcome the fact it does not take away from the existing voucher program. It does, of course, emphasize the importance of the voucher program, but it also will leave us, and I hope we will address this in this Congress later this year or early next year, a program for the reconstruction of housing in New Orleans for people of various incomes, some of whom will not be able to return to their homes without the construction, with Federal help, of affordable housing.

We know how to do that. We have very good examples of it. And it is very important that we go forward.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I, too, join with my colleague and the ranking member of our Financial Services Committee in commending those on the opposite side of the aisle who really do have the providing of housing for low- and moderate-income persons on the top of their priorities.

And while I commend them because they have always shown an interest in doing this, I think we are all to be criticized for how slow this process is in dealing with the victims of Katrina and Rita. We have just got to be able to move faster than we are moving.

And while, again, today what we do in replacing those vouchers is a good thing, I am still worried about the fact that there are so many people who needed housing even before Katrina and who are going to be left out there to receive whatever resources are available from FEMA, but they will be back in the same situation they were in before, still without adequate housing, still, I suppose, on some kind of a waiting list and still among those in the United States of America without decent and adequate housing for themselves and their families.

□ 1545

Let me just say, as I raise the question about us being slow and not doing enough, one may ask what could have been done in this period of time. Well, by now we should have an assessment of all of those buildings, all of those apartment buildings, all of those

homes, many of which are considered dilapidated, sitting everywhere from Baton Rouge to Alexandria to New Iberia, on into Texas and other places where we could have created a program by which to provide resources to bring these houses and units up to code in order to create more housing. There are a lot of such homes, a lot of such units.

Do not forget, many of the areas that we are dealing with were in deep housing crisis before Hurricane Katrina. While I am very respectful of the fact that FEMA moved people to Utah, California and New Jersey, what I am hearing is people do not want to be in New Jersey and in California and other places. They want to be near their homes; they want to be near their home cities and their home towns.

I think that we could by now have done an assessment of all of those properties that could be rehabilitated, some of which are owned by individuals, others owned by corporations, and put together a program for rehabbing and rehabilitation and bringing them back online in order to make them available.

We should also be about the business of converting warehouses into lofts and moderate-income housing. And even in some of the factory areas that are closed down, dilapidated, boarded up throughout the South, there are opportunities for the creation of housing. And there are many nonprofit, low-income and moderate-income developers who are waiting for an opportunity to be of help. I think we could have done more.

While I am going to vote for this bill, I do not pat myself on the back, nor do I pat the Members from the other side of the aisle on the back. I know they may be confronted with an administration that says it does not want to spend any money, but I must say that our citizens do not want to hear that the President or this administration does not want to spend money to deal with this housing crisis created by a natural disaster at a time when we are dumping billions of dollars into war, into Iraq, into Afghanistan. Our citizens are disappointed that we are not doing better than we are doing.

Madam Speaker, I include for the RECORD the complete article that I read a portion of titled, "Housing Promises Made to Evacuees Have Fallen Short."

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 2, 2005]

HOUSING PROMISES MADE TO EVACUEES HAVE
FALLEN SHORT

(by Spencer S. Hsu and Elizabeth
Williamson)

RED CROSS TO HALT HOTEL STIPENDS IN 2
WEEKS, AND HUNDREDS OF SHELTERS HAVE
CLOSED

Two weeks before President Bush's mid-October goal for moving Hurricane Katrina victims out of shelters, more than 100,000 people still reside in such makeshift housing, and 400,000 more are in hotel rooms costing up to \$100 a night. Housing options promised by the federal government a month ago have largely failed to materialize. Cruise ships

and trailer parks have so far proved in large part to be unworkable, while an American Red Cross program—paid for by the federal government—that allows storm victims to stay in motels or hotels is scheduled to expire Oct. 15. It is projected to cost the Federal Emergency Management Agency as much as \$168 million. Federal officials are struggling to launch an alternative interim housing program that would give families whose homes are destroyed or uninhabitable a lump sum of \$2,358 in rental assistance, or \$786 a month for three months, with the possibility of a 15-month extension. So far, 330,000 families have signed up for the housing assistance. But if evacuees have to use those stipends to pay for hotel rooms when FEMA stops covering such lodging, the funds will not last long. Last week, the number of evacuees in hotels increased from 220,000 to more than 400,000 people, in 140,000 rooms. Many have no idea what they will do when the program ends in two weeks.

Ronnie Ashworth, a truck driver from Chalmette, La., east of New Orleans, currently lives at the Baton Rouge Marriott. If no other housing is forthcoming after Oct. 15, "I'll be sleeping in the back of my truck," Ashworth, 60, said. "I have no funds right now." Red Cross spokeswoman Carrie Martin said, "We're administering the hotel program with the expectation that it ends on October 15th. . . . After that, we'll still have shelters open, but we definitely don't want to move backwards." Meanwhile, more than 100,000 people remain in about 1,000 shelters operated by the Red Cross, smaller charities and churches, scattered across two dozen states as far-flung as New York and Washington.

The Red Cross has said it will keep its shelters open for as long as necessary, but many are in churches and public buildings that are needed for their primary functions. Hundreds of shelters have closed over the past two weeks, and many of their occupants, the Red Cross said, appear to be moving into hotels, in hopes of benefiting from the hotel program in its final days. In search of temporary housing immediately after the hurricane, FEMA officials went on a \$1.5 billion spending spree, buying out entire dealerships of recreational vehicles and signing contracts for more than \$500 million with one manufacturer of mobile homes. But the plan to create "cities" of 500 to 600 RVs across the South has run into major logistical and political problems. In FEMA lots in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, several thousand trailers stand empty, waiting for the agency to navigate land leases, zoning laws, local opposition and policy questions. "We have 12,000 mobile homes with no place to put them," said Rosemarie Hunter, a FEMA spokeswoman in Baton Rouge. To date, only 1,396 trailers in Louisiana house displaced people. About 1,100 are occupied by workers engaged in New Orleans's recovery effort, and 173 house families left homeless by the storm. Policymakers say that warehousing tens of thousands of people in trailer park communities until New Orleans and other cities are rebuilt could lead to the creation of dysfunctional "FEMAvilles," as residents of past encampments have called them.

Democrats go further, warning that they may become known as "Bushvilles," just as Depression-era shantytowns were called "Hooverilles." Refugee Council USA, which includes nine U.S. resettlement agencies that have integrated 2.5 million global refugees into the United States since 1975, said storm victims would be better off getting on with their lives—finding housing, jobs and counseling services in new communities rather than waiting indefinitely for homes to be rebuilt. FEMA officials agree. Evacuees,

said FEMA spokesman Eugene Kinerney, "need to consider long-term housing in areas where there is available rental stock and prospects for employment to take care of other needs, such as food." But some civic and political leaders worry that the alternative—resettling storm victims—will lead many to stay permanently in their host communities, fundamentally changing the nature and politics of Louisiana and possibly beyond.

FEMA initially estimated that the homes of 300,000 families were destroyed by Katrina and that 200,000 of them will need government help with housing but said only time would reveal the true scope of need. The lack of an effective strategy to manage the largest displaced population of Americans in at least 60 years has touched off a furious policy debate. "The big picture is . . . everyone who has some scheme for how people should live is now living vicariously through the opportunity New Orleans offers" of a blank slate, said Ronald D. Utt, senior researcher at the Heritage Foundation. "All this push and pull is happening, and all of which can be lumped in with some notion of social engineering." Policy think tanks from the Brookings Institution on the left to Heritage on the right have criticized FEMA for relying on trailers as it traditionally does for hurricane victims, saying Katrina's scale overwhelms that solution. By contrast, they say vouchers provide more choices to individuals, reduce the need for building public housing and take advantage of existing housing stock.

In a joint statement last week, Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) criticized how long it took the Bush administration to implement its voucher program. "It wasn't until nearly one month after the disaster struck that the Bush Administration finally announced it would begin to provide rent payments to families displaced by the storm," as Democrats urged, they said. Under the FEMA housing assistance plan, families that remain eligible can get as much as 18 months of cash assistance for a maximum of \$14,148, but the money would count against a cap of \$26,200 per family that Congress has set for FEMA to give in cash, rental assistance and home repairs.

Even before FEMA announced the program, Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes (D-Md.) pushed a plan through the Senate last month to provide \$3.5 billion in housing vouchers to 350,000 Katrina-displaced families. On Friday, Sarbanes called on Bush to transfer control of housing assistance from FEMA to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. "The scope of this disaster calls for changes in how we think about disaster assistance," Sarbanes wrote the White House. "Hundreds of thousands of people may need housing assistance for 18 months or even longer. We cannot rely on FEMA, an emergency response agency, to provide on-going housing assistance to this large number of families," he said, citing HUD's "experience, staff and infrastructure."

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the concerns raised by the gentleman from California (Ms. WATERS) with regard to the forward-looking picture of housing needs in not only the disaster-stricken area but across the Nation, but particularly in the Hurricane Katrina area which I was fortunate to be adjacent to and not a part of.

It is certainly clear that a new housing vision is required. Much attention has been given to the city of New Orleans where damage was significant. Much attention, however, has not been given to areas north and south of the city, whether it is St. Bernard Parish or St. Tammany. In St. Tammany, the wind damage was extensive. Acres upon acres of large trees were blown down across streets, across houses. The damage was difficult to believe.

In St. Bernard Parish where the flooding left 9 to 14 feet of water in houses for periods up to 2 weeks, it is tragic to think what people will discover when they are finally able to revisit their neighborhoods. Certainly normal government strategies will not work in the face of such tragedy.

At the direction of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) and working with the administration, the President, Secretary Snow and Secretary Jackson, we will have a plan to consider in the House of Representatives that will be different and unique. We have the capability to address this problem that we have never addressed before with a response that has never been proposed before. We hope to have such legislation before the break next week; but if not, immediately upon our return.

I look forward to working with the Members on the other side of the aisle and all Members from the affected areas. We understand that the needs are great, and the needs will not be met in one year or two. This is going to be a decades-long remedy requiring the patience of the Congress and the continuing generosity of all Americans.

None of us could foresee the scope of devastation. None of us would wish this on any place in the world; but it has happened and there are people who are living in shelters without resources, without futures, not knowing what tomorrow will bring. We have a high obligation to respond, and the Members of the Louisiana delegation fully intend to do their best in meeting this need.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3894, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Ms. WATERS. 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.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BAKER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3894.

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

There was no objection.

RURAL HOUSING HURRICANE RELIEF ACT OF 2005

Mr. BAKER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3895) to amend title V of the Housing Act of 1949 to provide rural housing assistance to families affected by Hurricane Katrina, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3895

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Rural Housing Hurricane Relief Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. DISASTER AUTHORITY.

Section 541 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490q) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 541. DISASTER ASSISTANCE.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this title, the Secretary may exercise any authority described in subsection (b) with respect to the counties designated as disaster areas pursuant to the declaration by the President of a major disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) in connection with Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita, and the counties contiguous to such counties, and for any individuals who resided in such counties at the time of the disaster.

"(b) SPECIAL AUTHORITIES.—The authorities described in this subsection are as follows:

"(1) CONVERSION OF RENTAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may convert rental assistance under section 521 allocated for a property that is not inhabitable because of the disaster into

"(A) housing voucher assistance authorized under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)); or

"(B) rural housing vouchers authorized under this title.

Any conversion and use of rental assistance pursuant to this paragraph shall apply only for the period described in subsection (c) or a portion thereof, as determined by the Secretary.

"(2) WAIVER OF RURAL AREA REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may, for the period described in subsection (c) or any portion thereof, waive the application of the provisions of section 520 with respect to assistance provided under this section, as the Secretary considers appropriate.

"(c) DURATION OF AUTHORITY.—The period described in this subsection is the 6-month period that begins upon the date of the enactment of this Act.

"(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In addition to funds otherwise available to carry out this section, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out, during the period described in subsection (c), this section or any other activity authorized under this title."

SEC. 3. RURAL HOUSING VOUCHER AUTHORITY.

During the 6-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture may exercise the