

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

authority under section 542 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490r), except that in carrying out this section—

(1) notwithstanding the first sentence of subsection (a) of such section 542, the Secretary may assist low-income families and persons, but only if—

(A) such family or person—

(i) 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

(ii) 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; and

(B) the residence of such family or person became uninhabitable or inaccessible as result of a major disaster or emergency referred to in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph; and

(2) subsection (b) of such section 542 shall not apply.

SEC. 4. GUARANTEED LOANS FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING.

Section 502(h) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1472(h)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (4), by striking “or construct” and inserting “, construct, repair, or rehabilitate”; and

(2) in paragraph (14)(A), by striking “made under this section or guaranteed under this subsection” and inserting “used to acquire or construct a single-family residence that meets the requirements of subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (4)”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) 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, H.R. 3895 is important legislation to again provide flexibility to the Rural Housing Authority relative to converting available funds to vouchers to provide additional options for those displaced by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. It also provides additional loan flexibility with regard to repairs and remodeling pursuant to storm damage for existing loans now provided by the agency.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, who have been extraordinary in their desire and willingness to help those of us in the gulf coast area with remedies to the identified problems.

This legislation, the second of three to be considered by the House today, is an important step. Not in and of itself a significant remedy, but it does provide significant new flexibility to a historically proven and valuable program. For these reasons, I believe it is highly important for the House to adopt this matter as well as the legislation to follow. In cooperation, all three bills will

provide significant and meaningful assistance to those who find themselves without a place to call home.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I intend to vote for this bill, as I believe all of us plan to. It is a very reasonable approach. It makes some changes in the rural housing program which are limited both geographically and chronologically, which is the way to do this short-term approach.

There were some other issues raised, and the majority has agreed with us there are other changes that could be made in this program; and I believe we will be taking them up later to do a more permanent situation.

There is one permanent change here involving the program known as the 502 program which gives some flexibility in financing and I think all who are interested in this favor.

I will take a minute or two to note, this is about rural housing. This is housing built with Federal help, generally public-private cooperation, federally subsidized, assisted housing in rural areas; and I stress that because too often when we talk about Federal housing programs, people think only about the big cities. Here we are not talking just about New Orleans, but the adjacent parishes. As the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) pointed out, we are talking about small communities along the Mississippi coast.

There is a need for housing assistance in various places, and we should stress again this is very important housing that helps people of low- and moderate income in rural areas, sparsely settled areas, to have decent places to live. So it is a reminder that housing programs are not simply big-city programs, but appropriately done are programs that meet needs in various places.

What this does is to give the flexibility during the next 6 months so the rural housing programs and the housing built there in the affected areas, people can respond to that with some flexibility. Money will not be lost; money will be reprogrammed. It is a product of a great deal of thoughtful collaboration on both sides of the aisle, and I intend to vote for this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BAKER. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, who has been extraordinarily cooperative and is exhibiting great leadership in helping the people of the gulf coast deal with these catastrophes.

Mr. OXLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation and commend the sponsor of the legislation, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr.

BAKER), for his tireless work and dedication for providing housing relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

Residents of the rural gulf region have been especially affected by the devastating impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. While media attention in the aftermath of these catastrophes has been focused on the urban disaster, particularly New Orleans, rural communities in the region, and individuals and families who are assisted by rural housing service programs, face a challenging road.

Rural areas are often plagued by poverty, high numbers of substandard homes, affordable housing shortages, costly development, and inadequate access to mortgage loans. RHS, through its programs, provides direct loans, guaranteed loans and grants to help families obtain and maintain affordable housing in those rural areas. Because so many rural families in the gulf region have left their communities, either because their housing is now in ruins or because they have settled in another community, it is extremely important that RHS has the flexibility to provide assistance to these families who have been displaced from rural gulf communities.

The legislation we are considering today will enable RHS to continue to meet the needs of rural families who have been displaced by the hurricanes. This legislation will temporarily give RHS the necessary funding options it needs to keep families in the program in the wake of this disaster. In short, this important revision will give RHS the ability to convert to vouchers funds tied to a rural housing project that is no longer habitable due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. RHS will have the authority to reprogram funds in either HUD section 8 vouchers or RHS vouchers authorized under title V of the Housing Act of 1949.

This legislation is designed to provide temporary housing relief for families affected by the hurricanes and upon enactment will be effective for 6 months.

Next, H.R. 3895 will expand the flexibility of RHS by temporarily eliminating the current limitations regarding the number of vouchers that can be issued and where they can be used. Again, this is a temporary suspension, to be in effect for 6 months upon enactment, which reflects the need for timeliness and efficiency in securing housing for rural families under RHS programs.

Finally, this legislation amends the single family housing guaranteed loan program by expanding refinancing to include loans for housing repair and rehabilitation. Currently, repair and rehabilitation costs cannot be financed from refinanced guaranteed loans. This legislation will also allow refinancing of loans from borrowers who are not currently in the USDA single family housing program.

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While these authority changes to the single-family housing program are not limited to disaster situations, they will be very helpful in assisting families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

H.R. 3895 will help ensure that housing assistance continues to be available to those of the neediest individuals and families in the rural gulf region, who have already suffered greatly in the aftermath of the hurricanes.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and, Madam Speaker, point out that the committee, once again, has worked effectively through these issues, these three suspension calendar votes, in anticipation, as the gentleman from Louisiana pointed out, and my friend from Massachusetts mentioned, with a goal of looking at a long-term solution to this problem that is one that will not go away and will be over a period of years, as the gentleman from Louisiana pointed out.

I want to say to the members of the committee and to the House that this committee stands ready to do what is necessary to bring relief to those regions in a fiscally responsible manner. I have every reason to think we will do exactly that.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE), a member of the committee.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, let me thank our ranking member for yielding. Also I want to thank the ranking member on the Housing Subcommittee for her leadership and for really trying to make sure that these bills before us today have bipartisan support and have become better bills as they move through this process.

People displaced by this horrible disaster deserve clean, safe and decent housing. They should be provided with the opportunity to return home as quickly and as safely as possible. Yet, I do not believe these bills accomplish this goal.

HUD has not received, first of all, nearly enough authority or funding to do what is necessary to provide for the Katrina survivors. First, nowhere do we acknowledge the inadequate response to date of the administration or the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the housing crisis in the gulf.

Secondly, there is no additional funding in any of these bills for the CDBG or emergency housing vouchers for families affected by Hurricane Katrina. There is not enough money at HUD, and we should not redirect funding that is already inadequate in one account, to move it to another account. Indeed, we need more resources to accomplish what we need to accomplish. The bottom line is, there needs to be new money for housing, and we need it now.

Finally, there is not enough thought given to prohibiting the use of substandard housing for Katrina survivors or for the creation of affordable hous-

ing construction programs for new, safe and affordable housing. Although these bills waive the pre-inspection process for about 6 months for Katrina survivors in terms of their housing needs, I really worry that people will find themselves living in substandard and dilapidated housing if we do not monitor this very closely.

What I find also very striking about these bills is that there are no measures to ensure that Katrina survivors can return to the gulf region without fear of housing discrimination from landlords or lenders. There are some serious housing policy issues at stake in these bills. There should be more opportunity for debate and thoughtful legislation.

Madam Speaker, the reality is, these bills do very little for the people who are relying on us to help. Having traveled to Houston and having talked to Katrina survivors; I went to the shelters, like many, and I have heard firsthand the needs and seen firsthand their pain. I know very well that housing, providing affordable decent safe housing, is very central to their recovery.

When I think about how much Katrina survivors have lost, compared to what this administration is willing to sacrifice in their misguided budget priorities, it falls way short, I am sorry to say, of what we should be doing. We need to provide housing bills that create new funding for emergency, flexible, section 8 vouchers. We need to increase the funding and authority of HUD to truly help Katrina survivors and also to take steps to eradicate poverty. Effective housing strategies with full funding would help to begin to address these underlying systemic issues which surface during this tragedy.

I would like to thank our housing leaders again, Congressman BARNEY FRANK and Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS, for attempting to make these bills better. I welcome the opportunity to continue to work with my colleagues to authorize and to fund significant Katrina housing legislation in the near future.

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

Mr. BAKER. 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. 3895, 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.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. 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. 3895.

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

There was no objection.

HURRICANE KATRINA EMERGENCY RELIEF CDBG FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 2005

Mr. BAKER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3896) to temporarily suspend, for communities affected by Hurricane Katrina, certain requirements under the community development block grant program, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3896

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 Relief CDBG Flexibility Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC SERVICES CAP.

(a) UNITS OF GENERAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INDIAN TRIBES.—

(1) SUSPENSION FOR DIRECTLY AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.—The percentage limitations under paragraph (8) of section 105(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5305(a)(8)) on the amount of assistance under title I of such Act that may be used for the provision of public services by a unit of general local government or Indian tribe that is, or is within, a directly affected community (as such term is defined in section 4 of this Act) shall not apply with respect to any of fiscal years 2005 through 2008 for such unit of general local government or Indian tribe.

(2) AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND FOR INDIRECTLY AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.—For any indirectly affected community (as such term is defined in section 4 of this Act), the Secretary may waive the applicability, for such period during the fiscal years referred to in paragraph (1) as the Secretary considers appropriate, of the percentage limitations under paragraph (8) of section 105(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5305(a)(8)) on the amount of assistance under title I of such Act that may be used for the provision of public services by a unit of general local government or Indian tribe that is, or is within, such indirectly affected community. In determining the period for which to waive such limitations, the Secretary shall take into consideration the specific economic circumstances of each such indirectly affected community.

(b) NONENTITLEMENT COMMUNITIES.—Assistance provided under title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 may be used for the provision of public services in any directly affected community (as such term is defined in section 4 of this Act) without regard to the percentage limitations under paragraph (8) of section 105(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5305(a)(8)) on the amount of assistance that may be used statewide in non-entitlement communities for such activities and any such amounts so used in any directly affected community shall not be considered for purposes of such statewide limitations.