

I told him that day that I would introduce this resolution, and he was just delighted to hear that here in Congress there were many of us who were already concerned about this and we were going to at least try to take a stand in supporting these parents.

During this debate, we have talked about how every day we in Congress open our sessions with a prayer. We have already talked about how we have the words "In God We Trust" above the Speaker's podium. We have talked about how the Supreme Court opens each session with a prayer. So we wonder why the Fifth Court of Appeals would rule that voluntary community prayers would be prohibited and under threat of legal action.

These prayers are not government-mandated events. High school football games are community events. They are made up of, not only parents, teachers, and students, but sponsors and families from around the community. Some of them do not even have students in school, but like to come out and enjoy the physical activities of a great tradition that we have in some parts of our country.

These parents, teachers, and students are not asking us to pass a new law here in Congress. This is a sense of the Congress that simply allows us to go home and tell our constituents that we took a stand on this issue that is very important to them.

So let us not delay any longer. Let us take a stand. Let us let the folks back home know that we are on their side in this very important issue.

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, one of our most fundamental rights is under fire in the court system. The Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which presides over Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, recently told our students they cannot pray before a football game or any other sporting event sponsored by their school. This decision is an affront to the Constitution and sends the wrong message to our children.

I am an original cosponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 199, expressing the sense of the Congress that prayers and invocations at public school sporting events contribute to the moral foundation of our nation and urging the Supreme Court to uphold their constitutionality. I have consistently voted in favor of prayer in schools because it is wrong for the government to tell us when and where we can pray. The First Amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . ."

The United States Supreme Court has interpreted our constitution to all at least some prayer and religious expression in public schools. We have seen, however, that courts and school district officials are having great difficulty in drawing the distinctions between what is allowed and what is prohibited. With respect to our public school system, the government must be neutral on the issue of religion in the public schools, serving neither as its agent nor as its adversary. Therefore, constitutionally, a public school should allow a student to pray in school, but should not mandate organized prayer.

In the decision handed down by the Fifth Circuit, this principle of neutrality has been lost. Clearly, a court that prohibits prayers specifically at sporting events is not practicing neutrality towards religion. It is discrimination of one kind of speech—religious speech. Our courts should not ban this form or religious expression or attempt to regulate its content.

Mr. Speaker, I believe faith is essential in establishing one's moral and ethical character. I am sure the Members of this House agree because we say a prayer every day this House is in session. If Members of Congress can say a prayer at the beginning of each legislative day, then students should be allowed to say a prayer before a school sporting event. After all, our children do not check their religious beliefs at the schoolhouse door. We cannot allow a strained, out of touch court decision eclipse their rights.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting House Concurrent Resolution 199. Let's give our children the same rights we exercise here in the Congress. Let's protect the constitutional freedoms they are learning about in class, but currently unable to enjoy at the school football game.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res 199.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3064) "An Act making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes."

#### SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD RECOMMEND ACTIONS FOR RELIEVING VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FLOYD

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 349) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should immediately transmit to Congress the President's recommendations for emergency response actions, including appropriate offsets, to provide relief and assistance to the victims of Hurricane Floyd.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 349

*Resolved,*

#### SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The House of Representatives finds the following:

(1) Hurricane Floyd made landfall on the coast of North Carolina on September 15, 1999, as a category two hurricane.

(2) In the State of North Carolina alone, the hurricane caused the deaths of at least 50 individuals, damage to more than 40,000 homes, and billions of dollars in infrastructure damage and agricultural losses.

(3) Citizens of the States of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut have registered for Federal disaster relief aid as a result of Hurricane Floyd.

(4) More than 6 weeks after this disaster, the citizens of these States continue to await critical assistance from the Federal government to rebuild their homes, businesses, and lives.

#### SEC. 2. SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

It is the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should immediately transmit to Congress the President's recommendations for emergency response actions, including appropriate offsets, to provide relief and assistance to the victims of Hurricane Floyd.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER).

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

Mr. Speaker, this bill notes that the President should immediately transmit to Congress the President's recommendations for emergency response actions, including appropriate offsets, to provide relief and assistance to the victims of Hurricane Floyd.

On September the 14th, 1999, the State of Florida was staring Hurricane Floyd right in the face. Floyd was at that time packing winds of over 140 miles an hour. It was almost three times the size of Hurricane Andrew, which devastated southern Florida in 1992.

We should be thankful that Hurricane Floyd weakened and caused much less damage than initially seemed likely. But that is of little solace, however, to the victims of the heavy rains that Floyd delivered all along the East Coast.

In Florida alone, thousands of residents have registered for disaster assistance. They are among the tens of thousands of flood victims from Florida to Connecticut who need our assistance and need it quickly. However, before Congress can make certain that enough assistance is available, we need the President's estimate of how much additional money is required to meet the needs of these suffering individuals.

Unfortunately, the administration does not seem to think that this is an urgent matter. This resolution should change his mind. Now, if the President does not intend to propose any additional assistance because he believes no further aid is necessary, then we need to hear that. But I can tell my colleagues, based on what I know, we will need additional aid; and I would hope the executive branch, including