

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I recognize that FEMA's immediate focus is to provide relief for the victims in the Gulf States, but I take this time to ask the agency to reconsider its decision to deny South Florida individual assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As my Florida colleagues and I stated in a letter to the FEMA director, he has the authority to provide such assistance and I urge him promptly to do so.

I commend our Governor, Jeb Bush, for his efforts in deploying personnel and equipment to the impacted States, and I especially applaud his strong actions against price gouging. Members of Florida's extensive team of emergency response vessel crews, search and rescue teams, National Guardsmen and emergency management officials will continue to deploy from Florida to support operations in the impacted areas. These efforts represent Florida's largest State-to-State assistance in history. South Florida was devastated by Hurricane Andrew 13 years ago. We understand how long it will take for these Gulf State victims to recover economically, physically, and emotionally.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak about the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

I come from an area and a State that knows first hand the tragedy and suffering that can be caused by a hurricane of the magnitude of Katrina.

It is therefore from within this deep understanding that we extend our thoughts and prayers to all whose lives have been affected by this deadly disaster.

I fully support providing all the necessary assistance and funding and emphasize the need to use every available resource to aid all the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

I recognize that FEMA's immediate focus is to provide relief for the victims in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, but ask FEMA to reconsider its decision to deny South Florida Individual Assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

As my colleagues and I stated in a letter to Undersecretary Michael Brown, FEMA has the authority to provide such individual assistance and should promptly exercise such authority.

I am pleased that the State of Florida has responded so quickly to New Orleans and Mississippi.

The State has deployed personnel, equipment and commodities to Mississippi to aid response and recovery from the overwhelming impact of Hurricane Katrina.

In the hours and days after the catastrophic storm, Governor Jeb Bush pledged the support of Florida to Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour.

I must commend Governor Bush for his outstanding efforts, especially for taking strong action against price gougers, and for expressing his solidarity with the people so severely impacted in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Resources from Florida were mobilized through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Tons of food and money collected in South Florida are ready to be sent to ravaged Gulf Coast States.

Florida's State Emergency Response Team is supporting local officials and federal responders with search and rescue missions and emergency management operations in Mississippi.

Members of Florida's extensive team of emergency response vessel crews, search and rescue teams, National Guardsmen and emergency management officials will continue to deploy as needed to support operations in the impacted area.

These efforts represent Florida's largest State-to-State assistance in history.

I extend my most heartfelt gratitude to all those who have joined in efforts to provide assistance, especially all volunteers, representatives of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the National Guard, the Reserves, Emergency and law enforcement personnel, and Department of Health medical assistance resources.

Hurricane Katrina, and the devastating after-effects, has severely impacted many staff and Members of our own Congressional Community.

Specifically, the coastal districts of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi were most hard hit. Staff and Members from these areas have been personally affected and in some cases their district offices were either severely damaged or destroyed.

Although my home State of Florida, and especially my Congressional district in South Florida, were hit hard by Hurricane Katrina, we were fortunate that the damage was not as severe as was initially anticipated.

Yet, the damage incurred has serious long-term ramifications for the welfare of our State.

Thousands of constituents have suffered severe damage to their home and property, in addition to enduring power outages and lack of communications.

The Florida agriculture community was one of the hardest hit. Katrina's unexpected jog south caught many South Miami-Dade nurseries and groves unprepared.

As the agricultural community reels, the farmers, growers, and laborers who depend on the industry for their livelihood are tense with uncertainty.

Katrina's high waters and heavy winds inundated acres of agriculture.

Crop loss in Miami has been estimated at \$427 million and economic loss is estimated at \$691 million.

This loss will have far reaching effects as Miami-Dade's billion dollar agricultural industry is second to tourism as the areas top source of income.

It is clear that this is a nationwide issue that requires a nationwide response.

Our country's strength has always derived from the character, courage, and compassion of our people and, together, we will help each other through this difficult period and prevail over the devastation.

HURRICANE KATRINA

(Mr. SMITH of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in January I traveled to Aceh, Puquet and Colombo and saw American

foreign aid save the lives of tens of thousands of people ravaged by the tsunami. Two weeks ago, I was in Darfur, Sudan and visited refugee and IDP camps in that war-ravaged area and saw firsthand U.S. taxpayer funds and U.S. leadership saving and rebuilding the lives of hundreds of thousands of Africans. But charity begins at home, Mr. Speaker, and we must leave no stone unturned in our effort to save the lives of Americans, our neighbors, devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Today's appropriation is a downpayment. It is a beginning of an aggressive humanitarian effort that will take months, even years, to rebuild the lives of those shattered people. Today we say to the suffering, we will do whatever it takes to save lives, to mitigate disease, and rebuild.

HURRICANE KATRINA

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, we heard today the majority whip describe a domestic Marshall Plan for rebuilding the southeast United States and particularly the Port of Orleans and the city of New Orleans. I want to just mention how proud I am of the State of Texas, the Governor of Texas, who opened his arms to refugees from Louisiana 400 miles away. We have refugees from Louisiana all over north Texas right now, right next to my district office in Fort Worth, Texas. Last night I spent time with a mother who had been separated from her newborn baby, spent time with a child who had been separated from his parents, truly heart-wrenching stories from this area that were so badly hit by the hurricane.

I want to thank Attorney General Greg Abbott for his strong stand against price gouging. I want to thank American Airlines for freeing up assets to fly equipment down to New Orleans or to Baton Rouge and to bring people back. I want to thank DFW Airport for stepping up to the plate immediately and offering their assistance. This has been a widespread effort across North Texas. People have opened their hearts, their homes and their wallets. I trust this exercise will continue. I am now glad that the Congress is here and passed this money to help with the recovery.

□ 1400

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.