

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

(Mr. SMITH of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

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

There was no objection.

RESPONDING TO HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, today we have approved \$10.5 billion in Federal funding to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This is one of the largest natural disasters to ever hit the United States, and it is essential that Federal, State and local governments work together in a bipartisan fashion to provide the relief that is vitally needed.

As a member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I recognize the important job that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has to coordinate disaster relief and life-saving efforts. The funding that we provide here today will go a long way to supporting that effort.

The effort to recover the Gulf Coast is costing FEMA \$750 million a day. At that rate, we anticipated we would run out of funding by next Tuesday, so it is critical that we deliver this help today, and we have.

Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, but this is not just a Gulf Coast disaster. We are all in this together. We are all Americans. We all want to help our fellow citizens.

Back home in my State of Connecticut, Governor Rell and Members of the delegation are taking action. We have activated 100 National Guard troops with experience as military police to try to help regain civil order in New Orleans. In addition, the governor has added four colleges in our State university system to offer free tuition and space to students from Connecticut who otherwise were studying at colleges that have been demolished by the storm.

The governor has called upon Connecticut residents to do what they can to help, and they are responding. Around the State, civic groups, churches, businesses, and individuals are collecting bottled water, blankets, batteries and other essentials to ship into the region.

Just this morning, my wife, Heidi, dropped off food and baby formula at the New London armory in an effort to help. Others are doing the same.

Hurricane Katrina has given America a tremendous challenge. Family members cannot contact loved ones and are unaware of their condition and their fate. There are sanitation and health problems that must be addressed. People are homeless and need to be evacuated. Children are out of school and need to get back into school.

The hurricane and the ensuing flood were deadly, disruptive and costly. We must respond as a people and stay united in that response. Just as we recovered from the man-made disaster of 9/11 a few years ago, so we will recover from this natural disaster as well, if we work together. If we are divided, we fail. We fail ourselves, we fail those who look to us and who need us and we fail the Nation.

HURRICANE KATRINA RESPONSE

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

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise in support of the emergency relief bill. I know that all of us have been held rapt by the images and stories coming out of the Gulf Coast. The sorrow and suffering there is almost unimaginable, and it is my fervent hope and prayer that relief, real relief, will come soon.

On top of our grief, there is also outrage for it is nothing short of outrageous that in this country, where we talk of 9/11 every day, we still have not dedicated enough resources to improving our emergency response capabilities.

The people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, as they wait day after agonizing day for help to arrive, are crying out for leadership and more simply, for help. For those who have died unnecessarily, the help is already too late. If this is the best the world's greatest power can do for its own people, or if it is not, it is a national disgrace.

There will be plenty of time in the future to assess exactly why we were so poorly prepared for this storm and why it has taken the Federal Government so long after the levees broke to get effective help to New Orleans.

Certainly the roots of the inept handling of the situation are old and deep, but in the short term we need to focus on solutions. We need real leadership, a real plan, and a much bigger contingent of emergency transportation and aid workers. Reports from every corner of embattled New Orleans are that the presence of law enforcement is at best minimal, despite the declarations of the Secretary of Homeland Security, and there is, 5 days after the hurricane and 3 days after the levees broke, still no effective distribution of food, water or medicine.

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How can this be? We cannot let another hour pass without a substantive response to the glowing shortfalls in the relief and evacuation effort. I would like to join the minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), in her call for the creation of a Select Hurricane Relief Task Force.

Our hearts go out to all those affected as well as those doing their best to respond to this disaster. Tragically, it is evident that the Federal Government's response has been wholly inadequate. Congress must insist on immediate improvement so that we can put an end to the suffering in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast as soon as possible.

Finally, we must learn some lessons. We must not save money by not preparing to prevent or to ameliorate potential catastrophes. We did not, despite ample warning, properly build up and strengthen New Orleans' defenses against hurricanes. We are paying a frightful price for that negligence.

We are not now buying the loose nuclear material in the former Soviet Union before it is smuggled to al Qaeda to make nuclear weapons.

We are not now inspecting more than about 6 percent of the millions of shipping containers that enter our ports every year, any one of which could contain a weapon of mass destruction.

We are not now adequately protecting our chemical and nuclear facilities against sabotage that could kill hundreds of thousands of Americans.

We should learn from this disaster. The administration and Congress cut the budget for building up the levees, and we are reaping the whirlwind. The administration has acted unbelievably lethargically in bringing relief efforts, and people have died as a result.

Let us not continue our negligent disregard until we suffer a nuclear or chemical catastrophe. I am tired, Mr. Speaker, of passing post-catastrophe relief bills. It is time the administration and this Congress act to prevent the next catastrophe.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MAINTAINING ORDER IN A TIME OF NEED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, we have all seen a tragedy of tragedies this past week. We are here as representatives of the American people to attempt to try and ensure that the proper governmental response is possible, and it is not a