

Mr. Speaker, tell me where the line forms to ask hard questions.

□ 1545

#### RISING TO THE OCCASION AS AMERICANS TO HELP AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, yes, New Orleans is worth saving and rebuilding. It is one of the most American cities, for it represents how diversity comes together in harmony and blends into our music, our foods, our culture, and our Americanism.

Response to this disaster was a miserable failure. Americans died, Americans went hungry, Americans were living for days without water and without health services. You can live without food for 7 days, but you cannot live without water. Our health services were dysfunctional. We must admit, we failed at protecting our American citizens in our own homeland.

We as Congress must rise to the occasion. We have American citizens suffering and cannot get immediate help to them. Medics always take our wounded off the battlefields. Our social contract says trust us and we will deliver in your time of need. This is America's Gulf War.

One-half million people have been uprooted. Millions of people in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, have been affected. 150,000 of the displaced live below the poverty line, and 50,000 of them are post-retirement age.

So what are we doing about it? What am I doing about it? I have called my State government, I have called my board of education, I have called my local representatives to ask them to do a displacement absorption plan; invite them to California, invite them to Los Angeles. Share your housing with a family. Share your schools, your colleges and your universities with those post-secondary students. Both public and private colleges must kick in.

We have started the New Orleans Hurricane Relief Fund. I am collecting money, along with several other organizations in the L.A. area and with one of our major radio stations, and we are having that money hand-carried into these disaster areas to the leadership that has been chosen to be responsible.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that we can do and we must do, and we must do them now. I do not want to watch television another evening and see people begging for food and water, begging for medicine, begging to be taken out of areas that are soaked with water that will be causing diseases, with an environment that is polluted from the smoke coming up from the buildings that are on fire.

Where are we when the world is watching? I am embarrassed for the U.N. to say we are going to help you,

but I am overjoyed that other nations are addressing our needs when we are in need, as we have addressed theirs when they are in need.

So let us rise to the occasion. Let us save Americans. They are not refugees; they are citizens of the United States.

#### IN SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this emergency appropriation.

This is a moment of crisis for America. This is a test of our character as a great nation.

As we gather here in relative comfort, Americans are dying in Louisiana. At this moment, Americans are facing danger and desperation in Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi.

We all have seen the horrific pictures. We have heard the desperate screams for help. We all have heard the accounts of the almost unimaginable devastation that has gripped America's Gulf Coast.

Now is the time for Americans to immediately respond. Now is the time for us, as a people, to take action with a force equal to that of Hurricane Katrina.

We face an enormous challenge; yet, this is not the time to become overwhelmed. It is, however, a time that cries out for a heightened sense of urgency.

Now is the time for immediate and effective action, as a nation and individually.

The Federal Government is responding—and we are moving to pick up the pace.

Today, the Congress will approve a \$10 billion emergency aid package to help fund relief efforts.

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus have pledged to do all that we can to help. Several of our members will be visiting the Gulf Coast in the next few weeks to provide support. However, we cannot stop here.

The Bush administration and the Congress must demonstrate that we share the sense of urgency felt by those on the front lines of this battle for survival on the Gulf Coast. We must dedicate the full resources of the Federal Government to stabilize, repair, and rebuild this important region of our country.

There is no time to waste, for people are dying. The destruction caused by the aftermath of this storm gets worse every hour.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans felt lucky just to be alive after surviving the storm. Now, they are in a continuing struggle for their survival. Men, women and children (our countrymen) have now gone days without food—and far too long without the clean water and medical attention that they need. They are surrounded by flood waters littered with dead bodies.

It is the frail, sick, weak, and elderly that are dying, all while the Nation is about to celebrate a long holiday weekend.

Many of those now in such dire circumstances were already living in poverty and destitution even before Hurricane Katrina. They had no ability to evacuate. And, now, their very survival depends upon the response of their country.

Many of these Americans who now are struggling to survive are Americans of color.

Their cries for assistance confront America with a test of our moral compass as a Nation. We cannot allow it to be said by history that the difference between those who lived and those who died in the great storm and flood of 2005 was nothing more than poverty, age or skin color. It would be unconscionable to stand by and do nothing.

I had a constructive conversation yesterday with Mr. Claude Allen, the President's top assistant for domestic policy. I am confident that the Federal Government is expanding and intensifying its response as I speak.

Yet, government cannot succeed in this challenge without help. We must challenge leaders in the private sector to formulate strategies as to how they can best contribute.

We have long heard claims of "compassionate conservatism" among our Nation's leaders. This is the time for those with wealth and resources to step up to the plate and demonstrate that compassion.

This is the time to save human lives. People are dying because they have no water. Companies that bottle water now have the power to save lives. Infants are dying because there is no baby formula to keep them alive. Companies that make this formula must be on the front lines. Food companies could work with the National Guard to coordinate the distribution of food to the victims. Private contractors that have helicopters and boats and buses at their disposal could put those tools to work in the service of their country.

It has been reported that oil producers and home improvement stores may actually benefit in the long run from Hurricane Katrina. These are industries that should be the first to offer support.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not saying that nothing is being done at this time, although we all expected the Federal response would have been more immediate.

Nevertheless, generosity of spirit is being demonstrated by countless individuals in this country who have given an outpouring of support.

Now, however, is the time for those who can make a major impact with just one phone call to do so. And if these private companies already have something planned, it is important that they coordinate their efforts to provide their help most effectively.

This crisis demands a heightened—and sustained—sense of urgency.

The public has asked what they can do. They can begin by donating to the various charities that have pledged to help in the relief effort. They can also follow our lead today by demanding that the mayors and governors across this great Nation provide essential services to those now seeking shelter and aid.

In Matthew 25, verses 34 through 40, the Lord gives a simple explanation of what is demanded of true Christians:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed

you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Mr. President, the least of our brothers have lost the little they had. They are hungry, they are suffering, and they are vulnerable now to the worst expressions of human desperation. You have recognized that our response to date has fallen short of our duties.

And I fear that God, also, would not be pleased. We are called on to do all that is necessary to care for our brothers at this time. And we pledge to work with you to extend our Nation's hand and all of our Nation's resources to those in dire need.

When history looks back upon how our Nation pulled through this difficult time, let it reveal a record worthy of a great Nation.

#### HELPING VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, like so many families, my family has been watching the horrible scenes that we see from Mississippi and Louisiana, and really every day my wife, Leslie, and I talk about how lucky we are and talk about how really the trivial problems in our life are just that, trivial, compared to what is going on elsewhere.

Last night, I told her a story that I had not thought about in a long time, that was, that back in 1969, it was August of 1969, three friends of mine from school, Jim Caperton, Doug Young and Sammy Sells, we went down to Jackson, Mississippi, for a school program; and we were there when Hurricane Camille struck the coast. Some National Guard came to our meeting and said, Would any of you volunteer to go down and help clean up after Hurricane Camille?

Well, Doug and Jim and Sammy and I decided we would do that. We wanted to help, and we also thought it would be an adventure. So we got in the back of the National Guard truck and started heading down to the coast. As we drove down there, there was just a steady stream of cars and trucks and buses coming the other way. So many folks had all the goods that they could salvage tied down to their car and were coming this way.

Then when we got there, it was shocking. I had seen what a tornado could do in my hometown of Murphysboro to a house, and I had seen how it was torn up. But at that time, what you found is that the hurricane would send in these massive tides. They would tear down anything in their way and then take it all back out to sea, and it was like it had never been there before, and all you might see would be maybe some brick steps here and there to a home. It was, as I say, shocking.

The first thing that we were asked to do was to hand out food and water to some of the survivors there. It was, again, shocking to see the desperation on their faces, the unbelievableness of what was happening to them.

It really reminds me, there was an old blues song that said something to the effect that the only thing that I own is what is on my back, and I have been wearing those clothes for the last 4 days. That was really the situation of all these people at that time.

Then they took us over to a dorm late that night, or what seemed to be a dorm, there was no electricity or water and all the windows were all blown out, and we swept the glass out, turned over the mattresses and fell asleep in an exhaustive state and got up the next day.

The next day our job was to sort through clothes that had been shipped from all over the country. We would separate them into women's clothes and men's clothes and different sizes, and we handed out those clothes again to people that were lined up in the only clothes that they had for quite some time.

So my wife, Leslie, last night was telling me, we have a four-year-old daughter, her name is Payton, and like all little girls, she has outgrown a lot of her clothes. I have been trying to get my wife to donate them to the church so that someone would get some good use out of them, but Leslie feels like sort of giving up those clothes is like giving up those early years of our daughter's life. But last night she said, You know, we need to box these clothes up and send them to Mississippi and to Louisiana. So that is what we are doing.

Then I called my mother and I talked with her, and she told me the story that she has told me a lot of times in the past. When she was a little girl, their house burned; and when their house burned, they lost everything. Back then, when you lived out in the country and your house burned, you did not have insurance. All you had was your neighbors and friends and whatever generosity that they might provide. So now I think that really we really are the neighbors and friends of these desperate folks down in Louisiana and Mississippi, and we all need to try to find a way to help them.

I hope I can help you to help them. For the ones of you that live in the Sixth Congressional District in Tennessee, you can get on my Web site, [www.house.gov/bart](http://www.house.gov/bart), and we will give you a list of organizations and ways to help. If you do not live in the Sixth District of Tennessee, then the Federal Government has set up a Web site, it is [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov), and that is the way that you can help.

I think by helping, it makes all of us feel that in some way we are trying to relieve this horrible pain that other folks are going through. They are our neighbors, and we need to help. Here is how you can do it.

#### PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, we gathered here in the People's House today to provide some financial assistance to those who have suffered as a result of this natural disaster. I think it is important for us to remember that those who are suffering most are those who are the poorest among us.

I was reading the New York Times, and I read this comment from an engineering professor at the State University of Louisiana who has served as a consultant on Louisiana's State evacuation plan. He said that little attention had been paid to the evacuation of New Orleans' low mobility population, the elderly, the infirm and the poor without cars or other means of fleeing the city, about 100,000 people.

We knew this disaster was upon us days before it reached our shore. In fact, the President went on television and urged people to evacuate the city. We saw the TV pictures of cars lining the freeways as they were heading northward out of harm's way. But apparently there were many in New Orleans and elsewhere along the hurricane's path that did not have cars, that did not have credit cards, that had no means of renting an automobile for transportation, that could not afford a bus ticket, that simply were left behind. These were the poorest among the city's population.

Then the flooding came, and these, the sickest, the poorest, the oldest, along with many children, have died; and the sad truth is that many have died unnecessarily. Many have died simply because they lacked for water, they lacked for food, they lacked for timely medical attention.

We are the greatest, most advanced Nation on the face of the Earth. We have at our disposal every resource that is known to mankind. Yet when disaster hit our own country, when our own citizens were without food and water and medical care, we did not respond in a timely manner, so many lost their lives. And those who lost their lives were primarily black and they were primarily poor, and that should strike at the conscience of every one of us.

We are all a part of a great human family, but we are also a part of a great national family; and when tragedy strikes any of us, all of us should feel affected.

Mr. Speaker, the House has done a good thing today in providing initial relief resources, but there is much more that needs to be done in the days and months ahead. One of the things that must be done is for us to examine ourselves as a Federal Government and as a people. Why is it, why is it that it is the poor, the minority, the child, the elderly and the infirm who are most likely to suffer in times of disaster,