

people of this nation join in the effort to help rebuild and sustain the lives of the Hurricane Katrina victims.

CONCERNING THE DEVASTATION
AND FEDERAL RESPONSE TO
HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask that we consider four realities about our nation's response to Hurricane Katrina.

Allow me first to commend all of the Americans who have responded so nobly. They have demonstrated the best of our shared humanity.

That brings me to a second, less-praiseworthy reality. Poverty, age and skin color—in that order—have been major factors in this life-or-death equation for the vast majority of the victims. That is a fact, not an opinion—a fact that we must address as a nation.

As Americans, we are all in this life together—especially during times of imminent danger and emergency. And the policies and actions of our Federal Government should reflect this reality.

Third, as we respond to this disaster—and as we prepare for the dangers that the future will surely bring to our country—we cannot eliminate the reality of widespread (and growing) poverty on the Gulf Coast and throughout this country. And we must not act as if what we do here in Washington has no impact upon that deprivation. The Census Bureau just reported that for the fourth straight year, the number of Americans falling into poverty has increased. Thirty-seven million Americans now live in poverty, including 13 million children.

Not surprisingly, those who were already most vulnerable were the largest group of Americans left stranded, unable to escape the storm or the flood that followed.

The poor, the sick, the weak, the vulnerable—so often after-thoughts in today's Federal budget decisions—were left behind again. We must care for them and help those who survived to reclaim their lives.

That means, in the first instance, that we must not further penalize those who have suffered so much.

For those who were living in the Gulf Coast disaster area, we should: (1) Stop the clock on Federal time limits for all income related benefits (including those related to TANF, food stamps, and Federal Unemployment Insurance benefits); (2) Suspend the work requirements for TANF and the requirement that those who receive unemployment insurance continue to look for work; (3) We should extend Medicaid eligibility to CHIP parents for 12 months; and (4) The Federal Government should cover all the costs for these programs, relieving the hard-hit states of this burden.

In addition, we should do everything within our power to employ the people who have lost their jobs and homes as a result of this disaster in the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Government and the private sector should begin immediately to retrain and hire these Americans to participate in the rebuilding of their communities.

We should make sure they are mentally ready to begin rebuilding by offering coun-

seling services, similar to those offered after 9-11. With skills, job and counseling where necessary, they will be able to become home owners and re-establish the foundation of their communities.

Finally, we also must face and overcome another reality. Federal budget choices (misguided choices, in my view) have seriously weakened the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the federal agency that is supposed to be our safety net of last resort when disaster strikes.

The media has been accurate in reporting how decisions by the Administration and the leaders of this Congress to cut funding to the Army Corps of Engineers and the FEMA disaster prevention programs have weakened our ability to respond effectively.

Choices made in Washington have resulted in deaths in New Orleans. The President and this Congress must account for the shortcomings in the Federal disaster effort for which we are responsible—and work together to do a better job in the future.

As I close, allow me to say that I remain optimistic. I am optimistic that we will find a way to organize FEMA in a way that allows it to respond effectively—maximizing the saving of lives.

I am optimistic that this Congress will come up with a viable plan to try to make these victims and evacuees whole again—partisanship aside.

I believe that the American people are up to this test—that we truly can rise to overcome almost any hardship that is thrust upon us.

Any of us—and our families—could well be facing the same hardships, the same pain, the same loss of home and job and dignity that the survivors of Hurricane Katrina must now overcome.

These are our people, my friends, and this is our country. We have it within our power to rise from the hesitancy and failure of past days and rebuild. We shall rebuild New Orleans. We shall rebuild the Gulf Coast. And we shall rebuild our self-confidence as a great Nation and a great people.

COMMEMORATING THE SESQUI-
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF
ARCADIA, WISCONSIN

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate Sesquicentennial celebration of Arcadia, one of Wisconsin's many treasures. Named after the Arkadhia Mountains in Greece, Arcadia boasts an historic downtown in the midst of some of the most beautiful farmland and countryside in western Wisconsin.

It is fitting that I join with the 2,400 residents of Arcadia to celebrate the town's founding, because this truly is a town that has not forgotten where it came from. Perhaps Arcadia's most storied attraction is its Memorial Park. The park's 54 acres display monuments and tributes to the town's history, our nation's wars and conflicts, and those men and women who fought and died in them. The walkway through the park is measured so that each meter represents one year, so visitors complete their own guided tour of history. Joining the statues,

plaques, and monuments are some of the real instruments of war: a tank, a Howitzer artillery gun, and an F-16 fighter jet. The dedication shown in procuring these artifacts and the endless care that go into maintaining the grounds demonstrate that the spirit of America runs through Arcadia.

Apart from Memorial Park, Arcadia exemplifies the quality of life available to those who call rural America home. The Trempeleau River, which flows to the Mississippi, offers opportunities for fishing and canoeing, eagle-watching is popular year-round, and stock car races are held every Friday in the warmer months at the Fox Ridge Speedway. The town also hosts the Arcadia Broiler Dairy Days celebration over Memorial Day Weekend, which includes the 62-mile Memorial Bike Tour. This vibrant community truly is a model for rural areas across the state of Wisconsin and America, proving that a city doesn't have to be big to be creative, exciting, and fun.

A giant corn maze in town already announces the sesquicentennial celebration, which will be held this Saturday, September 10, 2005. Arcadia will mark its first 150 years with such events as the dedication of a local firefighters memorial, a classic car rally, and the entombing of a time capsule to remind future generations of this great milestone. I congratulate the residents of Arcadia on their sesquicentennial, and I thank them for all they have contributed to the character and economy of western Wisconsin. I wish them continued happiness and prosperity in the next 150 years.

STATEMENT OF INTRODUCTION OF
THE HURRICANE KATRINA BANK-
RUPTCY RELIEF AND COMMU-
NITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today Rep. MEL WATT, Rep. JERROLD NADLER, Rep. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE and twenty four additional original co-sponsors have joined me in introducing the "Hurricane Katrina Bankruptcy Relief and Community Protection Act of 2005", to protect the thousands of families and small businesses financially devastated by Hurricane Katrina from being penalized by anti-debtor provisions contained in a new bankruptcy law scheduled to take effect on October 17, 2005.

We are concerned that, just as survivors of Hurricane Katrina are beginning to rebuild their lives, the new bankruptcy law, effective October 17, 2005, will result in a further and unintended financial whammy.

Unfortunately, the new bankruptcy law will have the consequence of preventing thousands of devastated families from being able to obtain relief from the massive and unexpected financial obligations they are incurring. The inflexible bankruptcy law will force victims of Hurricane Katrina to repay debt with income they no longer have, file paper work with documents that no longer exist, and travel to courts that are possibly hundreds of miles away. It is simply absurd to place these obstacles between survivors and financial security.

When the Judiciary Committee considered the Bankruptcy Abuse and Consumer Protection Act earlier this year, Ms. JACKSON-LEE offered an amendment to protect the victims of