

possible to help the citizens affected by Hurricane Katrina without unnecessarily blowing an even bigger hole in the budget deficit.

INTRODUCING A BILL ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL INDEPENDENT INQUIRY COMMISSION ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation establishing a National Independent Inquiry Commission on Disaster Preparedness and Response (NIICDPR) to examine and evaluate the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina and assess our ability to respond to future large-scale disasters.

While the long-term impact of Hurricane Katrina will be felt for years, our evaluation of the Federal Government's response to, and preparation for, this and other major disasters—natural and man-made—must begin immediately.

Mirrored after the 9–11 Commission, the NIICDPR will consist of 10 members with no more than 5 being from either the Republican or Democratic parties, thus ensuring an independent and diverse make-up of commission members. The NIICDPR will be afforded the same powers which the 9–11 Commission enjoyed and will be tasked at finding the answers to the critical questions that we all have. These include but are not limited to:

Were we adequately prepared to respond to a disaster of this magnitude? Are we any more prepared today than we were before Katrina?

What plans were in place before Katrina made landfall to meet power, utility, and telecommunications needs following the storm? What plans are in place for future disasters?

What was the availability of adequate resources to meet the needs of displaced individuals and families, including temporary housing, medical services and facilities, transportation, and food and water supplies?

Did our federal disaster response plans consider the needs of all communities? What plans existed to ensure that underserved communities reached safety before and after Katrina?

How effective was the Federal Government in its rescue and other life-saving techniques?

Was the federal response to Hurricane Katrina efficiently coordinated with State and local governments? Was it adequate and appropriate in size and scope?

What improvements do the Executive and Legislative Branches need to make to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our disaster response programs?

Mr. Speaker, my Congressional District received the brunt of three major hurricanes last year. As I said earlier today, certainly our first priority has to be to rescue those who are still alive and provide them with housing, medical attention, food, and water. However, as the Gulf Coast turns to the recovery and rebuilding processes, the billions that Congress will spend will not be enough to fix the problems that exist within FEMA.

Based on my own personal experience dealing with FEMA and its director over the last year, I warn the Members of this body that the problems you see today are just the tip of the iceberg—and it has nothing to do with the magnitude of the disaster.

Inconsistency in FEMA regulations, constant reinterpretations of the Stafford Act, federal officials treating local emergency operations centers like revolving doors, lack of coordination, and FEMA's fluid and unclear chain of command are just a few of the many significant and real problems that Floridians dealt with last year and are still dealing with today.

I have literally begged the committees of jurisdiction in this body to hold hearings on these shortcomings. I even introduced bipartisan legislation in March with our colleague, CLAY SHAW, to address a slew of institutional problems within FEMA that we experienced first-hand last year.

Yet every time we take our concerns to the committees, we're told, "It's not a big enough problem to consider on its own." Well, Mr. Speaker, is the problem big enough now? How many people must die in a disaster before something becomes a "big enough problem" in this Congress?

Accountability is the only way to restore integrity in a broken system. An independent commission is the first step in repairing our disaster response system, which we all now know is woefully inadequate.

I ask for my colleagues support for this legislation, and I urge the House Leadership to bring it swiftly before the House for its consideration.

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES OF NATION TO VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

**HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my thoughts on perhaps the worst natural catastrophe to occur in America in my lifetime. Hurricane Katrina wreaked devastation beyond any we've seen and we will feel its wrath for years to come. As a Nation, we will continue to grapple with the destruction and the task of rebuilding.

In the days and weeks to come, we will keep the survivors and victims in our thoughts and prayers while we begin the arduous process of surveying the damage. As of yet, we still do not know how many lost their lives during the onslaught of the storm or in the aftermath. The early estimates place the lives lost in the thousands, and the coming days may push that tally higher.

We will also pray for the survivors many of whom have been evacuated to the surrounding states. I am proud that San Antonio, my hometown, is opening its doors for thousands of Americans who have nowhere else to go. In some ways, this is America's finest hour as strangers have opened their homes and communities to people who departed from New Orleans on buses or planes often with just the clothes on their backs.

Of course, we cannot praise enough the brave men and women of the Gulf region's police departments, rescue teams, the National

Guard, and the Armed Services. Time and again, they risked their lives to rescue the thousands of stranded people in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. When their Nation called, they answered. This week, we will fill the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD recounting their bravery and selflessness in the face of horrors and danger rarely seen in this country. They did better than could be expected with the resources and supplies they had.

Inexcusably, the administration failed both these heroes and those in need of aid. In the days after the hurricane had passed, the slow and inadequate response created another crisis that compounded the initial damage. Who was not angered and frustrated as the images from New Orleans washed over us like the floodwaters that engulfed the city after the levees were breached? How is it possible that we could not transport food, water, and medicine to the thousands trapped in the city? How could the conditions in the Superdome and the Convention center grow so dire?

We could assemble one of the world's most formidable military forces to invade Iraq which is halfway across the globe, yet we could not transport the essentials to a major American city. This simply boggles the mind and moves the conscience to anger and shame. Because the various governmental agencies lacked direction, thousands may have died days after the storm subsided. Will the administration continue to blame the State and local governments for being unable to coordinate a relief effort too big for any one entity save the Federal government? This is unacceptable, and clearly Congress will need to investigate and remedy the shameful shortcomings of the current Federal emergency management system.

Some of my colleagues say that the race and the poverty of the victims dictated the speed of the relief effort. Some would also condemn the fiscal priorities of an administration that has pursued reckless tax cuts during a time of war and while our national infrastructure literally crumbles. Early reports indicate the administration cut funding for the Army Corps of Engineers to maintain the levee system in New Orleans. Yet, until all the facts are in, I urge my colleagues to reserve judgment, yet failing to fully investigate this calamity no matter how painful or embarrassing it may prove would breach our duty to the American people. We owe this to those the administration failed.

H.R. 3673, THE SECOND SUPPLEMENTAL FOR HURRICANE KATRINA

**HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support for H.R. 3673, the Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Hurricane Katrina Response. This measure provides an additional \$51.8 billion for hurricane relief, with \$50 billion of that for relief and cleanup activities by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, \$1.4 billion for hurricane-related activities by the military, and \$400 million for the Army Corps of Engineers for restoration work on navigation locks and for channel dredging.

We have all been moved by the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, and we must now all pull together to help those who are facing the greatest challenges in their attempts to recover and respond to Katrina's wake. In times of hardship, Americans come together to help each other. Time is of the essence, and each of us must do what we can to respond to this natural catastrophe.

Once the deadly threat posed by Hurricane Katrina became apparent, Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI publicly called for a special session of Congress to get to work and send relief to the victims struggling in the Gulf Coast. I was pleased that Republican leadership finally answered Leader PELOSI's call and convened the U.S. Congress to pass a \$10.5 billion emergency supplemental spending bill for the people suffering in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Today we will pass an additional \$51.8 billion in the Second Emergency Supplemental for Hurricane Katrina. While these funds are much needed they are coming before us today on the suspension calendar which does not allow us adequate time for debate or an opportunity to add important amendments. Hurricane Katrina is clearly the worst natural disaster in U.S. history, and we are missing the opportunity to address some critical issues, such as creating a commission to investigate the federal response to this disaster and making FEMA an independent agency.

Mr. Speaker, the Congress must provide leadership in helping those displaced by the hurricane to rebuild their lives and communities out of the wreckage left in Katrina's wake. In the weeks and months ahead, Congress will consider additional spending measures to aid victims of the hurricane. As Americans, we have pulled together through tragedies in the past, and I know that we will demonstrate that same unity in overcoming the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. DAVID DREIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as you know, on the afternoon of September 7th, I was in New York at the United Nations formally thanking the international delegates on behalf of the House of Representatives for their support and assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Over 90 countries have offered to help us recover from this natural disaster, and I was privileged to have the opportunity to thank the international community on your behalf.

As a result of my presentation in New York, I was unfortunately unable to be present for two recorded votes that day. Had I been present, I would like the record to reflect that I would have voted "aye" on H.R. 3169, to provide the Secretary of Education with waiver authority for students who are eligible for Pell grants who are adversely affected by a natural disaster. I likewise would have voted "aye" on H.R. 3650, to allow United States courts to conduct business during emergency conditions.

#### THE NEW ORLEANS CRIME VICTIMS DESERVE COMPENSATION

### HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of those who demand a more detailed legislative effort. Official criminal neglect is the crime of New Orleans. First response neglect is the immediate and short-term crime. Our government should've responded faster with more. Long-term crime caused by partisan politics, the greed of powerful selfish legislators who lack compassion, the looting of billions from the Federal treasury for the wrong reasons, the institutionalized prejudices against big cities; all of these evils have festered over the years to produce the highly visible, horrifying gangrene of the New Orleans disaster.

Congress and the President deserve high praise for the emergency appropriations. But this allotment is for the weeks and months ahead. On day one of this disaster the U.S. already had all of the resources necessary to achieve the safer, faster and more thorough rescue of the desperate population of New Orleans. Criminal incompetence and some contempt for the stranded population blocked the perceptions of how to speedily mobilize resources. In 1940 at Dunkirk, under heavy fire from German forces, more than 300,000 British troops were rescued and ferried back to England. Success was achieved because Winston Churchill immediately understood the gravity of the situation and called for the mobilization of every vehicle that could float. The crime and the pity is that all of the helicopter and naval craft marvels of our military were not immediately ordered to blanket the flooded neighborhoods of New Orleans.

Decades of debate and refusals to seriously address an obviously dangerous set of circumstances facing one of America's great cities is the long-term crime at the heart of this involuntary manslaughter. For decades Washington refused to finance state of the art technology to lessen the dangers of flooding in New Orleans. In recent years the Bush administration has compounded the problem by cutting already inadequate budgets.

Since we refused to shield this crime victim from the life-threatening assault that has now been perpetrated, the bleeding New Orleans deserves maximum compensation. The Hurricane Katrina emergency appropriation is a promising beginning. To accomplish its purpose the provisions of the legislation must be expanded to include the following:

The establishment of a Right of Resettlement for all who want to return.

The immediate establishment of an Emergency Free Communications Network with cell phones for all refugee families.

The establishment of a Job Corps for able bodied refugees which mandates their priority hiring for jobs related to the cleanup and rebuilding.

The establishment of Faith and Community Based Family Resettlement Projects to assist in the relocation of refugee families.

The establishment of Family Resettlement Accounts for families who wish to relocate to some other part of the country.

The establishment of an Emergency College Student Temporary Resettlement Program utilizing Colleges that volunteer to receive students, faculty and administrators.

The provision of Impact School Aid for school districts where large numbers of refugee families are located.

A mandatory review and revamping of the Corps of Army Engineers Master Plan for New Orleans.

A federally funded initiative to establish "Fail Safe" Committees in local communities.

In summary, Congress must act immediately to specify how the Hurricane Katrina appropriation will be spent. There is a clear and present danger that billions will be contracted out to Haliburton type corporations and refugees will receive only a very meager benefit. We members of Congress must remain vigilant to guarantee that no more official crimes will be perpetrated against New Orleans.

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#### INTRODUCTION OF THE PENTAGON 9/11 MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 8, 2005*

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues from Virginia, Maryland, D.C., Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey to introduce legislation recognizing the importance of a national memorial at the Pentagon to commemorate and mourn the terrorist attack against the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

This legislation is modeled after a resolution (H. Res. 175) my friend and colleague from New York introduced earlier this year in support of efforts to create a September 11, 2001 memorial at the site of World Trade Center.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 4th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it is appropriate that we establish memorials at the sites of these attacks to honor the victims.

On that fateful day four years ago, the 59 victims of American Airlines Flight 77 and 125 military personnel and Defense Department employees at the Pentagon died and scores more were injured in a dastardly and unprovoked attack against the American people.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have joined the pantheon of national tragedies and become a defining moment in United States history.

These attacks of September 11, 2001 affected all Americans, not only for the tragic loss of life, but also for its emotional toll on our public conscience. Two-thirds of Americans report that the attacks had a great emotional impact on them, and virtually all Americans can recall precisely where they were and what they were doing when they learned of the attacks.

And while all of us were beset by the tragic loss of life and untold suffering, we found solace in the inspiring and heroic actions taken by the crew and passengers of Flight 93 and by the firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, military personnel and ordinary citizens who raced to the scene of these attacks and saved lives, keeping the attacks from taking an even greater toll.

It was a tragic day, but a defining moment in our nation's history.

I applaud the efforts of those who have worked to build the memorials to honor and