

Hurricane Katrina appears to be headed for the history books as one of the worst national disasters ever to hit the United States. Yet the deeper tragedy is not just how large a toll this storm will eventually take, but how avoidable it all could have been.

The devastation wrought on the Gulf tonight is the result of two terrible disasters. The first was the fury of nature. The other is the unnecessary consequence of this government's inexcusable failure to prepare for the inevitable.

The primary function of a government is to ensure the safety of its citizens. This Congress and this Administration have failed to do so in the most incompetent and willfully negligent way imaginable.

This hurricane was not a surprise. For decades meteorologists, State and local officials, Army engineers, academics, and, yes, FEMA have warned that a Category Four or Five hurricane hitting New Orleans was among the top three most likely major disasters to affect the United States and that we must be prepared. The most recent analysis was conducted just last year, where a computer simulation of the fictional "Hurricane Pam" pounded New Orleans much as Katrina did, pushing the waters of Lake Pontchartrain through the levees flooding the city and stranding 300,000 poor and African-American New Orleanians.

The day before Katrina reached land, FEMA's own director, Michael Brown, raised the possibility of the levees being breached. On August 28th, Brown told CNN that "we knew from experience, based back in the '40s and even in the late 1800s, if a Category Four or Five hurricane were to strike New Orleans just right, the flooding would be devastating. It could be catastrophic." And yet the President said just yesterday that "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees."

Plans to prepare for this catastrophe had been developed at FEMA as early as the 1990s when President Clinton's FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, laid out a plan for coping with a nightmare scenario in New Orleans that included pre-positioning hospital ships and pumps to handle the catastrophe. Why this was not done is just the beginning of the laundry list of problems with the response to this disaster. Command and control has still not been established. There are FEMA personnel on site and they can do nothing as they await instructions from the bureaucracy in Washington. When will someone take control? The Gulf Coast desperately needs a leader to emerge at FEMA who can direct its operation. Why has this taken so long?

Lurking just below the surface is another set of troubling questions: What if this had been a terrorist attack? Is our emergency response capability so weak that a levee breach, or power outages, or debris can incapacitate an entire region? President Bush has pledged repeatedly since 9/11, now over 4 years ago, that he would keep our country safe. Is this the best this Administration can do? Do our citizens not deserve all the protection and support this government can provide?

The reality is that this country is woefully unprepared to respond to a major domestic disaster in this country because FEMA has been systematically dismantled over the past 5 years by incompetent leaders, anti-government ideology, budget cuts, and bureaucratic red tape.

FEMA's current problems essentially began with the creation of the Department of Home-

land Security, which demoted FEMA from cabinet-level status and reduced it to one of 22 organizations under the umbrella of the Secretary of Homeland Security. Next, its mission was reprioritized and its budget cut, taking the emphasis off of responding to natural disasters while the upper ranks of management were filled by patronage hires, five out of eight having had no emergency preparedness experience. At the same time, FEMA's professional staff was becoming increasingly demoralized. By this week, nine out of ten regional director positions were vacant, as were three out of five disaster response director positions. This brain drain left an agency without the proper leadership, resources, or influence in government to cope with a major catastrophe.

Responsibility, however, does not rest solely with the Bush Administration. This Congress has been a willing co-conspirator in the degradation of FEMA's capabilities.

Since 2001, many Federal disaster mitigation programs have fallen to budgetary pressures. FEMA's Project Impact, a model mitigation program, has been canceled outright. Federal funding of post-disaster mitigation efforts designed to protect people and property from the next disaster has been cut in half, and now communities across the country must compete for pre-disaster mitigation dollars.

In 2003, Congress approved a White House proposal to cut FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program in half. Previously, the Federal government was committed to investing 15 percent of the recovery costs of a disaster toward mitigating future problems. Under the Bush formula, only 7.5 percent are given. Experts say that such post-disaster mitigation efforts are the best way to minimize future losses.

In 2004 alone, Congress cut FEMA's budget by \$170 million.

And FEMA is not the only agency to feel the effects of budget cuts. Bush's 2005 budget proposal called for a 13 percent reduction in the Army Corps of Engineers' budget, down to \$4 billion from \$4.6 billion in fiscal 2004 and the New Orleans Corp of Engineers was to lose \$71.2 million out of its budget, the largest cut in its history. This is the very agency responsible for the New Orleans levee system. Assistant Secretary of the Army Michael Parker was even fired for accusing the Bush Administration of failing to adequately fund the Corp of Engineers before Katrina struck.

Natural disasters are a fact of life in this country. Hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes are just some of the eventualities that will inevitably occur and need to be dealt with. Over the past decade, FEMA has responded to more than 500 such disasters with varying degrees of effectiveness. But Katrina has provided its first major test since September 11. The repercussions of the failure of that test are staggering.

Going forward, I believe we need to create a bipartisan, national commission, similar to the 9/11 Commission, to provide an objective look at what went wrong and to make recommendations to repair what is clearly a broken system. Doing so is essential to restoring the confidence of the American people in our government's ability to respond to a crisis on American soil and to keep them safe. The people of the Gulf Coast have demanded answers to their questions and we owe them that.

There is also much more to be said about what this catastrophe has to reveal about the

problems of race and class in America. It is in some way illustrative of this Administration's neglect of the less fortunate that those in the worst situations after this storm are the poorest and most disenfranchised populations—precisely the people this Administration's policies have, at best, callously ignored.

But social justice is a conversation for a later time. For now, we must focus on the immediate task at hand. Our duty is to do everything we can for the victims of this disaster and to rebuild the Gulf Coast. We begin tonight with this modest appropriation of \$10.5 billion. Hundreds of billions more are certain to follow. The money will pay for the finest clean up possible, but, in the end, it will not change the reality that things did not have to happen this way.

CONGRATULATING TOM ENGIBOUS

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Tom Engibous, this year's recipient of the American Electronics Association's Medal of Achievement Award.

Since 1959, the Medal of Achievement has been presented annually for significant contributions to the advancement of the high-tech industry and for distinguished service to the community, the industry and humankind. Mr. Engibous is fortunate enough to join the select group of high-tech leaders who have received this honor by becoming the fifty-first recipient of the coveted award.

Tom Engibous is the chairman, president and chief executive officer of Texas Instruments Incorporated. While serving in previous roles at TI, Mr. Engibous helped transform the company from a broad-based conglomerate to a semiconductor company. His strategic focus and ability to quickly execute on the elements needed to reconfigure the company laid the foundation for the TI of today—a semiconductor leader in signal processing technology that has gained widespread recognition among customers, the financial community and the general public.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Tom Engibous for receiving the highest award given by the American Electronics Association. His contributions to the technology industry and service to the community should inspire us all.

TRIBUTE TO SIMEON TERRY, NATIONAL MINORITY BUSINESS ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize today, Simeon O. Terry, Minority Business Enterprise Program Administrator for Austin Commercial L.P. in Dallas, who received the National Minority Business Advocate Award from the Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce on September 12, 2005.

Simeon Terry received this honor, in part, for his work as Minority Business Enterprise Program Administrator for Austin Commercial L.P. which is headquartered in my district. He is well known for his efforts to build minority business enterprises (MBE) that promote the inclusion of minority and women entrepreneurs in the Dallas business community while enhancing growth opportunities for minorities and women.

Simeon's background consists of a degree in Industrial & Safety Engineering and over 15 years in the construction industry. He has spent 7 years in the residential construction industry as a Safety Manager, Project Manager, and Operations Manager. In each position he had the opportunity to procure contracts with MBE firms both in specific construction scopes and supplies.

During his term as a Project Manager, over 80 percent of his contracts were established with MBE firms. Simeon also spent 3 years as a Surety Support Program Manager Consultant where he assisted MBE firms in becoming "bond ready", ultimately achieving bonding which would allow them to pursue various construction projects as prime contractors.

He also facilitated safety workshops for small MBE firms and provided consulting to review or establish their in-house safety programs to ensure that they had met the required safety programs for commercial construction. Simeon has consulted on numerous housing development projects in Dallas for non-profit organizations. He assisted local MBE contractors with project management and project administration duties such as estimating, scheduling, document control, certified payroll and project inspection.

Simeon is actively involved in his church where he teaches youth Bible Study, and plays the bass guitar for several choirs. He is also an active member of the National Society of Black Engineers, the National Society of Black MBAs, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Speaker, this Nation's small business community needs more giving individuals like Simeon Terry. His work has contributed much to making Dallas a better place to live for everyone.

I am proud to represent him in the U.S. House of Representatives and wanted to bring his many accomplishments to the attention of my colleagues.

JEWISH COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FOR ISRAEL'S DISENGAGEMENT

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, just before we adjourned, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston issued a very thoughtful statement in support of the disengagement by Israel from the Gaza Strip, and the dismantling by the Israeli Government of Israeli settlements in that area.

Mr. Speaker, this was a very wrenching process for many in Israel, and the willingness of the Government of Israel—supported by a majority of the people of Israel—to engage in this withdrawal with all of its difficult emotional strains speaks highly of that country's willingness to take steps for peace.

The withdrawal from Gaza should not be the last action taken in this process, but it is unreasonable to expect that they will be able to take further actions in the absence of a showing by the Palestinian Authority of its willingness and ability to respond in kind to this disengagement.

The statement of the JCRC is a first rate statement of what should be done going forward, and it is an appropriate expression of support of a majority of the Jewish Community of Greater Boston for a peace process that is thoughtful, balanced and prudent. I ask that this important statement be printed here.

JEWISH COMMUNITY EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR
ISRAEL'S DISENGAGEMENT PLAN

Nancy K. Kaufman, Executive Director and Susan A. Calechman, President of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston issued the following statement today regarding Israel's plans to disengage from the Gaza Strip and communities in northern Samaria.

The JCRC fully supports Prime Minister Sharon and the government of Israel as they begin implementation of the Gaza disengagement plan. Israel's vigorous democracy is taking bold and courageous risks in an effort to protect her security and to renew the process of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We also support the Israeli government's effort to resolve the conflict through a negotiated two-state solution as expressed in the Road Map. Final borders and other final status issues must be left to the parties themselves to negotiate in a peace process free from violence and the threat of violence.

Disengagement will only lead to a peaceful outcome if there is a commitment on the part of the Palestinian leadership to put an end to terrorism. We call upon the Palestinian Authority (PA) to disarm the terrorist groups and their infrastructure. This includes removal of existing stockpiles of weapons and preventing such stockpiles from being rebuilt; preventing the smuggling of weapons; closing of clandestine weapons manufacturing and preventing attacks, especially during the disengagement process. The future of peace, and the stability of the PA itself, is fully dependent on it taking this action.

We recognize the profound sacrifices being made by the families who are being relocated, some after living in their homes for nearly 30 years. The loss of their homes, synagogues, farms, businesses and schools is an immense sacrifice which should be recognized with efforts made to bridge any gaps that develop among Israelis as a result of this effort.

We condemn the rhetoric of a tiny extremist fringe that promotes violence as a response to policies undertaken by the democratically elected Israeli government. At the same time, the rights of free speech and lawful dissent which are basic and indispensable in a democratic society must be protected. It is critically important that those with differing views of the peace process condemn explicit hate speech, venomous language, and threatening words. It is also important that discussion among all the conflicting viewpoints be created to promote an atmosphere in which differences can be expressed with civility and respect.

We call on the U.S. government to continue its work with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to ensure that all commitments are met and that a resolution to this conflict leads to a secure peace for both sides.

HONORING STEPHANIE FOTI BELLIAN FOR HER EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE PEOPLE OF CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, this article is from the obituary section of the Jamestown Post Journal.

STEPHANIE BELLIAN

AUG. 30.—Stephanie Foti Bellian, 36, of 38 West Virginia Blvd., died Sunday (Aug. 28, 2005) in her home.

She was born March 28, 1969, the daughter of Sebastian "Busty" Foti and the late Shirley Walz Foti.

She was a 1987 graduate of Jamestown High School, attended Jamestown Community College, graduate from the University at Fredonia in 1991 and earned her master's degree from St. Bonaventure University. She was assistant director of continuing education at Jamestown Community College where she also taught psychology.

Active in the community, she was involved with the Chautauqua Leadership Network, Society for Human Resource Management, and the Great Empire Zone Board of Directors. She was also involved with the Southern Tier West Human Resource Committee, the Girl Scouts of Southwestern New York Policy Committee and volunteered with Hospice of Chautauqua County.

She will be sadly missed by her sister-in-law, Karen Foti, her nephew, Nicholas Foti and her brother-in-law, Joe Samaritano.

Besides her father of Jamestown, she is survived by a brother, Scott J. Foti of West Seneca; a sister, Stacey Samaritano of Hamburg; and her paternal grandmother, Josephine Foti of Jamestown.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Thursday in St. James Catholic Church. The Rev. Robert Stolinski, parochial vicar, will be celebrant. Burial will be in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Friends will be received from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday in the Hubert Funeral Home where a Christian Burial Service will be held at 8:30 p.m.

Memorials may be made to the Humane Society, 2825 Strunk Road; or Hospice of Chautauqua County, 4840 West Lake Road, Mayville, N.Y., 14757.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of this amazing woman.

HONORING LEROY E. LYON, JR.

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to remember and honor an outstanding citizen, Mr. LeRoy E. Lyon, Jr., from Granite Bay, California. Following a lifetime of dedication to God, family, and community, he died of a heart attack in his home Sunday, July 17, 2005. He was 84 years old.

LeRoy was born on Dec. 4, 1920, in Anaheim, California. His father, LeRoy, Sr., was a respected orange grower who served on the Orange County Board of Supervisors. This heritage led him to a career in public service as well.