

flood of 2005 was nothing more than poverty, age or skin color.”

This, I submit, is the continuing challenge of poverty in America—a challenge that will continue to test the moral fabric of our Nation. I applaud my colleague Representative BARBARA LEE, for her tireless efforts to shine a bright light on America's economic disparities and resultant poverty. I hope that her bill H. Con. Res. 234, serves to allow us to begin to discuss and to address solutions to ending poverty in this country. To do so, I firmly believe that we have to rethink how our federal fiscal and social policies are lending significantly to the poverty problem.

A moral people would take up this challenge. A moral people would understand that it is time for a change.

TIME TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT HURRICANE KATRINA COMMISSION

HON. WM. LACY CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, this is to register my support for the legislation, H.R. 3764, to establish an independent commission to study the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina.

The disaster brought by Hurricane Katrina is indisputable. The failure of government agencies and elected officials to effectively minimize the suffering and death of the victims in the Gulf Coast is indefensible.

History will record the Katrina disaster as a turning point in this nation's history. When the waters rose and the levees burst, the world watched as thousands of sick and elderly Americans, thousands of poor families with young children cried out for food and water. American citizens who trusted the advice of the government were abandoned in an evacuated city without food or water, without plumbing, without law enforcement, without transportation and without hope. The pictures we saw were nothing short of unbelievable. Mr. Speaker, in September 2005 the image of America was forever changed in the eyes of the entire world.

As a nation we can no longer pretend that all Americans have the opportunity to share in the wealth of this great nation. The winds of Katrina exposed the truth to all Americans and to all the world.

The very least this body must now do is to abandon the partisanship that has stifled public policy making for too many years. We are elected officials and our first responsibility is to represent the people—not to represent political parties. There should be no disagreement that whatever government did or did not do in response to Hurricane Katrina, we did not do our best. The mission failed. And it was not the failure of one person or the failure of one government agency or the failure of any political party—it was a collective failure. Now we must come together to do everything humanly possible to make certain that this never, ever happens again.

Mr. Speaker, we must establish an Independent Katrina Commission to assess the federal government's response to this hurricane and to determine what we must do to ef-

fectively respond to future large-scale catastrophes. The people of this nation expect nothing less. It would be stupid and it would be senseless for this body to even consider doing otherwise.

I implore my colleagues to remember the thousands of American citizens whose trust in our government was destroyed when their livelihoods were lost, their homes were washed away and the poor and the sick were left all alone to die. It will take a generation or more for most of the victims and their families to mend; this Congress must do everything possible to support them. The recovery of our nation is at stake. We must work to ensure that Katrina remains the single greatest natural disaster in our history. We need an Independent Katrina Commission to restore faith in this government and to ensure that we never again experience a preventable disaster.

RELATING TO THE TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and honor the more than 3,000 lives that were lost on one of the most tragic days in our history, September 11, 2001. Four years after this dreadful day, our Nation continues to mourn the loss of so many friends and family members, whose lives were cut short by previously unthinkable acts of terror.

In remembrance of the bravery of the passengers and crew on United Airlines Flight 93, I strongly supported Senate Concurrent Resolution 26, which pays tribute to their heroic efforts. Their decisive and brave decision to overtake the September 11 terrorists likely saved the lives of countless Congressional Members and staffers, as well as the U.S. Capitol or White House from almost certain destruction.

The San Jose community I represent was especially saddened by the loss of Captain Jason Matthew Dahl, the pilot of Flight 93 and a true American hero. Jason grew up in San Jose, and his parents used to deliver milk to Hillsdale Elementary School, where I served as principal. His courage and the courage of the passengers and crew of Flight 93 was reflective of the spirit displayed in abundance by so many Americans that day. Establishing a memorial as called for in Senate Concurrent Resolution 26 will be a permanent tribute to the 40 selfless individuals of Flight 93 who overcame fear and mobilized into action to defend their fellow Americans.

I hope that Congress will show that same kind of strength and focus in defense of our homeland. The campaign against terrorism will be a long-term engagement, but we owe it to the families of the victims of 9/11 to use all appropriate tools to ensure that such a tragedy will never happen again.

RECOGNIZING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. PATRICK J. TIBERI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, and in special recognition of Hispanics in central Ohio and throughout our country.

During this designated month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of our friends and neighbors with Hispanic roots. Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States. The 2000 Census found that 35.3 million people identified themselves as Hispanic American. That represents a 58 percent increase from the 1990 Census.

Beyond the data, the reality is that Hispanics are an integral part of America's social fabric. I am proud that the State of Ohio is home to more than 217,000 residents of Hispanic/Latino descent. Hispanic Americans continue to make great strides in education, employment, health, homeownership, and economic mobility. This is a result of a set of values that includes a strong work ethic, family values, and service to community.

Hispanic Americans in central Ohio serve the community in numerous capacities. In particular, recent immigrants unfamiliar with the English language are served by Spanish interpreters who help provide them access to health care, education, legal assistance and other vital services. Mi Directorio Hispano, a business directory, and Spanish newspapers in central Ohio, like La Voz Hispana, connect Hispanics with the community and keep them informed. The Ohio Hispanic Coalition, a non-profit outreach organization, and the Ohio Commission of Hispanic/Latino Affairs serve as advocates for the needs of Hispanic people and help to promote good relations among the community-at-large.

Mr. Speaker, the Hispanic community is a vital part of central Ohio and our country. As we move forward as a nation, it is important to pursue policies that can further expand opportunities for Hispanic Americans. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in support and in honor of Hispanic Americans, their culture and traditions, and their work and service that contribute to the greatness of this Nation.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3132, CHILDREN'S SAFETY ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Chairman, I have asked for unanimous consent to be removed from the list of cosponsors on H.R. 3132. My name was added to the list unbeknownst to me and my staff due to a clerical mistake made by the House Judiciary Committee Majority Staff. For the record, I did not ask to be added to the list of cosponsors.

Sexual crimes against children are terrible and reprehensible acts. I believe that it is vital that we take every precaution to protect our

children from sexual violence and that we punish those criminals who prey on our children. However, I stand today in opposition to H.R. 3132, the Children's Safety Act. While I support many of its provisions, I am concerned that this bill would expand the use of the death penalty, impose mandatory minimum sentences, and punish more young people as adults.

Although I believe that harsh penalties and aggressive prosecution of sex offenders are necessary, I oppose this bill because it would create at least two new death penalty provisions. I strongly oppose the death penalty because it is fraught with problems such as inadequate representation for the accused, lack of access to DNA testing, police misconduct, racial bias and other errors. Experts have found a national error rate of 68 percent, which means over two-thirds of all capital convictions and sentences are reversed because of serious error during trial or sentencing phase. In fact, former Illinois Governor Ryan declared a moratorium in 2000 after 13 people were released from death row because of innocence. The error rate in Illinois is 66 percent. Therefore, I believe capital punishment is inconsistent with Constitutional requirements of fairness, justice, equality and due process.

This bill would also create 36 new mandatory minimum sentences which are arbitrary, ineffective at reducing crime, and unfair. The United States Sentencing Commission found that minorities were substantially more likely than whites under comparable circumstances to receive mandatory minimum sentences with no evidence that mandatory minimum sentences had any more impact in reducing crime than sentences where the judges had discretion. Judges are exercising their discretion responsibly under advisory guidelines, and there does not appear to be an epidemic of judicial leniency. A proliferation of mandatory minimums is not the answer.

I agree that sexual abuse crimes against children are serious concerns today. Unfortunately, this bill takes the wrong approach. I am especially concerned that this bill allows for more youths to be tried as adults. For example, a 19-year-old who has consensual sex with a 17-year-old would be treated the same as an older adult predator of young children. The vast majority of children and teenagers show a high response rate to treatment and often do not become adult sex offenders. This bill would mandate lifetime sex offender registration for children and youth, and subject them to long prison sentences. Research shows that young people who are prosecuted as adults are more likely to commit a greater number of crimes upon release than youths who go through the juvenile justice system.

Representative CONYERS offered as an amendment to H.R. 3132, the provisions of H.R. 2662, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. I am an original co-sponsor of H.R. 2662, and strongly supported this amendment to H.R. 3132. This legislation would make it easier for the federal government to investigate, prosecute and prevent hate crimes across the country. And I hope it is enacted.

It is the responsibility of Congress to the young people of this nation and to all citizens to combat violence against children. Unfortunately, this bill takes us in the wrong direction. 33 scientific researchers, treatment professionals and child advocates have written to

express their opposition or serious concerns with this bill. Although this bill included the provisions of H.R. 2662, which I strongly support, I oppose H.R. 3132 because it would treat youths as adult criminals and lead to a potential increase in the number of innocent people being executed or languishing in prison.

CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT HURRICANE KATRINA COMMISSION

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the creation of an independent commission to investigate the preparedness and response to the overwhelming devastation and loss of life from Hurricane Katrina and in opposition to the creation of a partisan select committee.

I cosponsored Congressman HASTINGS (R-WA) bill to create an independent commission because it is the right thing to do. The 9/11 Commission proved successful in investigating all branches and levels of government and offered concrete suggestions to Congress to correct breaches in our national security. The Hastings bill follows that model and presents the best option for a thorough, impartial investigation into the federal response to Hurricane Katrina.

An independent commission is the best approach to this task, as it would allow a higher degree of impartiality and independence than a partisan select committee. I expect the Commission to conduct a thorough investigation of all the people and agencies involved by questioning everyone directly involved in the decision-making process, including the White House Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and former FEMA director Michael Brown. In addition to investigating the federal government's response to this horrendous natural disaster, the Commission should also determine if our country is adequately prepared to respond to another disaster of this magnitude, as well as serve the needs of all communities potentially affected. This Commission should also provide recommendations regarding improvements to the Executive and Legislative branches that would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster response.

Congress also has a constitutional duty to use its full oversight authority through the committee hearing process to assess the federal government's responsibilities and response to this disaster. We, in North Carolina, have plenty of experience with hurricanes and natural disasters, and we know that we must first rely on our state and local authorities to plan and prepare, but we make these plans with the knowledge that the federal government will back us up when we are overwhelmed.

Congress must make sure that the federal response agencies appreciate and understand their responsibilities to the states in the event of a disaster. Congress must hold the Administration to the highest standards of professionalism and vigorously conduct our constitutional obligation for oversight of these agencies. We must restore the professional integrity of FEMA to protect the American people

from natural disasters as well as terrorist attacks.

Mr. Speaker, our country has worked to increase its preparedness for four years since that tragic day in September 2001, and it appears our efforts have failed. We must work swiftly to correct past mistakes so that we can ensure the safety of all Americans during a time of crisis.

TRIBUTE TO HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to National Hispanic Heritage Month. During this month, America celebrates the traditions, ancestry, and unique experiences of those who trace their roots to Mexico, the countries of Central and South America, the Caribbean and Spain and we thank them for the many contributions they have made to this nation.

Unlike any other country on earth, America thrives on its ability to attract people of all faiths, colors and creeds to reside within its borders. Such mixing of cultural knowledge and experiences has helped this country to become the greatest nation the world has ever known. Moreover, as a Puerto Rican, I am very proud of the contributions Hispanics have made and continue to make to this cultural mosaic.

Hispanic influence on American culture is evident from every aspect of American life including music, film, food, arts, sports and politics. Economically, culturally, and politically, Latinos are an integral part of our nation. As we celebrate this special month I would like to pay special tribute to those who were Hispanic trailblazers and helped to bring the rich culture of the Hispanic people to the United States. As a Hispanic Member of Congress, I along with the rest of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, follow in the footsteps of great pioneers such as Joseph Marion Hernandez who became the first Hispanic to serve as a member of the United States Congress in 1822. Roberto Clementé, Celia Cruz, Raul Julia and countless others helped to open doors in their respective fields enabling the Hispanics of today to share their rich history and culture with all Americans.

As we forge ahead in the 21st century we must continue to work to guarantee that America is not only rich with diversity but equality as well. I am committed to ensuring that Hispanics are able to enjoy a higher standard of living for generations to come. It is important that Hispanics become home owners, attend institutions of higher learning, earn higher wages and receive quality healthcare. The success of this nation depends upon the success of all its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, for their many contributions to our nation and culture, and for their unyielding drive to achieve the American dream, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Hispanic Americans during Hispanic Heritage Month.