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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, source of inalienable rights and savior and protector of Your people, as the Nation is deeply moved to compassion for the people of the gulf coast region, the President of the United States has issued a proclamation: Tomorrow, Friday, September 16, 2005, will be considered a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Lord, we pray that Members of Congress, laying all political persuasion aside, will gather with their people over this coming weekend and be prayerfully united with those who have died, those who grieve over so many losses, and all who suffer because of this tragic event which has touched the soul of the South, so rich in spirituals, music, history, and gifted writers.

May You be praised, Lord, by all who gather this weekend in mosques, synagogues, churches, and homes to honestly pray for their brothers and sisters in need. May You be glorified in their glorious response of contributors of goods, money, and service, and by so many volunteers who wish to come to their aid.

May Your Holy Name be revered these days and for years to come by the perseverance of Americans, united to alleviate the suffering and build a future for the poor, the homeless, the jobless, and the widow and orphan.

This we pray now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MURPHY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con Res. 67. Concurrent resolution honoring the soldiers of the Army's Black Corps of Engineers for their contributions in constructing the Alaska-Canada highway during World War II and recognizing the importance of these contributions to the subsequent integration of the military.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain five requests for 1-minute on each side.

HURRICANE KATRINA

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, many people have spent time since Hurricane Katrina devastated the gulf coast attempting to place blame on various agencies and elected officials. I would like to take a moment to focus instead on the positive developments that are occurring down there. Day by day, we are seeing improvements, both big and small.

After Katrina, 80 percent of New Orleans was covered in water; now the flood waters have receded to 30 percent

and are continuing to recede. Over the weekend, trash collection began in the city, and those who remained behind are already cleaning up their neighborhoods.

In Biloxi, Mississippi, the harbor opened for the first time since Katrina hit. The Coast Guard is now allowing limited commercial traffic, an important step in the recovery of the region. Utility companies are now reporting that around 131,000 homes and businesses are still without power, down from over 800,000.

I am hopeful that some of the other side of the aisle will set aside their partisan barbs and start focusing on the progress that is being made. Fingerprinting does not help the families who lost their homes or loved ones.

INTRODUCING THE DISASTER PREPARATION AND LOCAL ACTION NOW ACT OF 2005

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Katrina highlights the need for disaster preparedness. Across the country, everyone is asking: Are we prepared?

Every level of government is reexamining how we can make our communities more disaster resistant. In James Lee Witt's FEMA, we had a tool to make that happen: Project Impact. This proven program brought together local leaders, citizens, and businesses to prepare for and protect themselves against the worst that nature could throw at them; and at the Federal level funding worked to leverage support from private sources, multiplying their effectiveness.

Unfortunately, this administration unwisely tossed aside Project Impact and broke a model that had worked so well. Today, I will introduce legislation to bring Project Impact back to

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life. The Disaster Plan Act will reauthorize FEMA's predisaster mitigation grant program. None of us can stop natural disasters from happening, but we can and we must be prepared for what happens when a disaster occurs. Project Impact was a program that worked in a FEMA that worked, and now we need to bring it back.

SAVING LIVES AND DOLLARS IN HEALTH CARE

(Mr. MURPHY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, each week I come before Congress to remind my colleagues of areas of health care where we can save lives and money. This week I want to mention that timely prenatal care, or medical care for women before pregnancy, can also save lives and money. One million American women deliver babies annually without receiving prenatal care, and in the United States more than 250,000 low birth weight infants are born each year who may subsequently have higher risk for various handicaps, heart defects, respiratory illnesses, et cetera. Women who are diabetic or are depressed have higher risk for this. The average costs in investing to help save these risks can save us between \$1 and \$4 when providing prenatal care and reducing neonatal intensive care costs later. It is a good investment for America to continue, and public-private partnerships are a way of continuing to do this.

I recommend Congress continue to look favorably on funding those programs that help provide prenatal care to continue to save lives and money.

For further information, I suggest my colleagues go to my Web site, murphy.house.gov, to learn about this and other ways that we can save lives and dollars in health care costs.

CALLING FOR A BIPARTISAN COMMISSION ON KATRINA

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the finger-pointing continues. Today's New York Times reports on its interview with former FEMA head Michael Brown. In the interview, Mr. Brown blames Louisiana's Governor and Homeland Security Director Chertoff for inaction in responding to the crisis.

Mr. Brown's statements can probably be discounted as the words of a disgraced individual trying to save face, but the facts speak for themselves: government at all levels failed in the wake of Katrina's devastation. A KnightRidder story makes it clear based on a 2003 Presidential directive that Homeland Security Director Chertoff is the line authority for natural disasters, yet for 36 hours he was nowhere to be found.

Questions need to be answered, not to fix blame but to fix a problem. For example, how were Mr. Brown and his political deputies, all with no experience in disaster response, appointed as head of FEMA? Why did it take so long to get food and water to New Orleans? To answer them, this body should create a bipartisan commission of experts to investigate the failures and flaws in the system just like we did during 9/11, just like we did during Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Speaker, hundreds died. Tens of thousands have lost everything. Billions will be spent rebuilding the infrastructure. The stakes are simply too high to not know what went wrong. Americans do not want Pollyannish speeches or a whitewash. They want answers and results. Mr. Speaker, we need a bipartisan 9/11-style commission not only to find out what went wrong but to give us recommendations to fix the problem.

CONFIRM JUDGE ROBERTS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday a judge in San Francisco ruled the Pledge of Allegiance, which we just said, is unconstitutional. Again, it is disturbing how a judge can strike down a voluntary act of patriotic expression. Any reading of the founding documents reveals that the first amendment was written to guarantee the right of expression. That should allow for public displays and proper expressions of faith in the public square. It also certainly allows for voluntary expressions of patriotism. But certain judges are ignoring it.

The Constitution established the judiciary as a coequal branch of government, not as the final and supreme authority. The hearings on Judge Roberts' nomination to the Supreme Court underscore the importance of confirming judges who understand this. We must maintain the proper checks and balances which our Founders designed. It is time for Congress and the President to stand up to the courts which have seized so much power to themselves. Ultimately, the survival of our constitutional Republic will depend on it.

CALLING FOR INDEPENDENT COMMISSION REGARDING HURRICANE KATRINA

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the House today is going to vote to create a special congressional committee on preparedness and response to Hurricane Katrina. My question is, why do we need a special committee? That is our job, anyway. We have a lot of committees in the House

that are supposed to be doing that every day all year.

What we need to do is see what happened. Let us have an independent commission to check both the executive branch's response and also the congressional branch. We need somebody to come from the outside and check both our test and our homework. Let us not have a sham or a whitewash.

SCHOOLYARD FIGHT OVER THE LADY NAMED KATRINA

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, a fight broke out in one of the public high schools in Houston, Texas, this week between numerous recent evacuees from Louisiana and students from the Texas high school. Several were arrested. The tension and energy between the "displaced" and the "hometowners" should be channeled in a productive way. As a former judge in Houston, I believe these culprits should be held accountable for their attitudes and their attitudes need to be adjusted.

At the end of class on Friday, the Louisiana kids should be put back on a yellow school bus and sent back to New Orleans to spend the weekend cleaning up their hometown from the mess left by Katrina. The Texas students should spend the weekend at the Astrodome helping the thousands of volunteers in the relief effort. Then when both sides arrive back at school on Monday morning, they should have a different attitude about cooperation.

The schoolyard fight is similar to those here in the Capitol who gripe, complain, moan and groan and put blame on others for the Katrina disaster, but do nothing personally to help. Cease the fighting words and rhetoric and get on with the rebuilding, refurbishing, and renewal of our Nation.

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NEED TO CREATE AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO EXAMINE HURRICANE KATRINA

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, later today the House will have under consideration legislation to create a select bipartisan committee to investigate the preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina. This would be a good commission if, in fact, it was bipartisan. But it is not bipartisan in the sense that both parties do not have equal access to the information or subpoena power or equal numbers on the committee to do the investigation.

Therefore, what we really need is a 9/11-type commission. The public overwhelmingly supports a 9/11 commission, an independent commission to