

Now, my colleagues will say, oh, no one could have anticipated this, and how could we have known, and this was a disaster of untold magnitude, and those local officials, they did not do their job. But it is actually the Congress that has to bear a lot of the responsibility here. It was the Congress that agreed with the politically motivated plan out of the White House to stick FEMA into the Homeland Security bureaucracy. It was the Congress that agreed with the President to cut the budget of FEMA, to cut the disaster teams from three to two. And we wonder why they could not respond and why people died unnecessarily?

We need a fair and honest evaluation and investigation comparable to the 9/11 Commission to unearth the facts around this. There are things that need to be done besides restoring FEMA to an independent, professionally led agency status with a robust budget. We are also entering into the greatest rebuilding effort and restoration and relief effort in the history of our country. We need to see that those monies will not be misspent; that those monies will not go to crisis profiteers; that they will get to the people and the communities that need it and the rebuilding will be done appropriately; that we will invest in the infrastructure that was not invested in to protect New Orleans.

And it is not unique to New Orleans. I have jetties failing in the State of Oregon. The Corps of Engineers has no money to fix them. If they fail much more, it will cost 10 times as much to rebuild them. I have a dam that was failing in my district, and the corps had to scramble all around the country to find the money to begin to rebuild that dam. It is not their fault. Congress has not given them the funds, and the President has not recommended the funds to protect the American people from disaster.

So we need to invest not only in a reconstructed FEMA but also in a more robust budget for the Corps of Engineers for prevention. And we need to make certain the dollars we are borrowing, because every dollar of this is borrowed, are spent wisely. And maybe we should reconsider the tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year and have estates worth \$600,000. Maybe they should contribute to the recovery effort too.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN MEMORY OF WILBUR MYRICK, A GREAT AMERICAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to honor the memory of a great American, my father-in-law, Wilbur Myrick. He saw a lot of change during his 95 years on this Earth.

He lived during the time when indoor plumbing replaced outhouses and water wells, when wooden stoves were replaced by electric stoves, and when food no longer needed to be cooked fresh, but could be refrigerated and cooked in a microwave. He saw transportation change from a wheel and wagon to cars, buses, and then airplanes. And he even saw a man walk on the Moon. He saw great medical advances like the eradication of smallpox and the treatment of life-threatening diseases with advanced medicine and surgery. He saw communications change from mail to telephones to faxes and to e-mail.

He lived through World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the gulf war, and the war on terror. He saw America rise to a world superpower, and he saw the Iron Curtain spread across Europe only to see it crumble years later. He saw the tragedy at Pearl Harbor and the tragedy on 9/11. He saw leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt.

In his later years, Wilbur still kept up with current events. He would sit and watch C-SPAN and call me about specific bills. He could quote the bill number and tell me what it was and what it would do, and then he would ask what were we going to do about it.

□ 1815

It taught me a lot about him and how much he loved America. If only we had more Americans like Wilbur Myrick. At a time when most Americans are filled with apathy, he stood out as an example of who we should all strive to be. He was filled with hope, hope for a better tomorrow and for a better America.

Perhaps the best words to be said about him are from his granddaughter, Mia Myrick Alderman:

“My grandfather died last night.

“Granddaddy was old, very old. His 96th birthday is just over a month away. He is no longer languishing in a convalescent home, his body giving out more every day. He is free again and with the others, the others who have gone before him. My grandmother, his wife, who called him ‘Myrick.’ His large family, including a sister who died during the 1918 flu epidemic when my grandfather was 9 years old. He did not get sick and all by himself he cared for his family and their farm. A strong 9-year-old, my grandfather grew to be a strong man.

“He was not a complicated man. I do not know much about his life before me. I am the oldest of his five grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren, but I know all about my granddaddy, who was just 51 when I was born.

“My grandfather is just another old man to die in a small North Carolina

town called Weldon. One of many who die every day, but to me he was a magical, special person. He was not in any way unique compared to all the other old men in Weldon, but when I went to visit my grandfather as a child he was very unique to me: His North Carolina-Virginia border accent; those southern sayings; the way he hugged me and laughed; the way his house and even the earth around his house smelled; the things he knew, secrets I thought only granddaddy knew, like how to thump a watermelon to see if it is ripe. I find myself doing that any time I buy one. I am not sure how it works, but I believe in magic. I loved my grandfather.

“I remember sitting on his lap as a very small child touching the black hair on his arm and I loved him. The last time I saw my grandfather in the hospital, I held his hand and looked at the hair on his arm, now barely there and I knew he would soon be free.

“When my grandfather died I lost forever a person and a culture that was magical and unique. Fascinating to me as a child and with me always in my child heart. My grandfather was a very unique and important man to me and I wanted to do this one last thing for him.

“As another old man from a little town called Weldon dies, so does my granddaddy, a very important man.”

STORMS DO NOT RECOGNIZE STATE BOUNDARIES, WHY DOES FEMA?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, first of all, to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the gentleman from California (Chairman THOMAS) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY). It is because of their flexibility and sensitivity that the residents of Florida who suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina are one step closer to getting emergency tax relief for those affected by the hurricane.

Today, we provided emergency tax relief for Floridians affected by Hurricane Katrina as well as for those affected in our neighboring States to our west. I am so pleased to have been able to come together with my Florida colleagues, Messrs. Foley, Diaz-Balart, and Shaw to make this possible.

As a Member of Congress that represents South Florida, I can empathize with the victims of Hurricane Katrina because my home, South Florida, has been struck by numerous hurricanes and is threatened by them every year.

The scenes of the destruction throughout Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have reminded South Floridians of the devastation of Hurricane Andrew, a Category 5 hurricane which struck South Florida 13 years ago.