

Katrina and Rita, the question comes up, how do we evaluate the Federal response and how do we learn from the events of the past 4 weeks? How do we protect our country going forward?

There are some in this body who have called for a special commission to conduct that inquiry, a special commission as opposed to a congressional inquiry. But I believe that Congress not only has the duty, I believe Congress has the constitutional obligation to undertake that process. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is one job that is too important for the other side to outsource.

In order for this to work, that is a Congressional inquiry, it is going to require participation from both sides of the aisle. It is not healthy for the country for one side to stand on the sidelines and point fingers.

And what about a special commission? Well, we saw that with the 9/11 Commission. Their former commission spokesman said that he could not evaluate the information on Able Data because the information provided did not mesh with the conclusions that they were drawing.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate for Congress to do this investigation and I look forward to the result.

SUPPORT FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to any further potential cuts to Federal assistance programs.

The Census states that 13 percent of Americans live in poverty and we have seen the face of poverty more glaring recently. In Dallas, my hometown, 23 percent live in poverty, almost double the national average.

America's economy is weak. It is strong for the wealthy but it is weak for the poor. Gas prices are outrageous, the cost of this war is crippling, and continuing conflict is an embarrassment. Tax cuts to the rich are putting down the poor.

Since the current administration took over, there are 5.4 million more people in poverty, 6 million more without health insurance. Americans need jobs, a decent minimum wage and affordable health care.

Mr. Speaker, people living in poverty need help. We must strengthen Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and temporary assistance programs, not cut them.

BANNING EFFORTS OF FAITH-BASED GROUPS

(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, the left is howling about how hurricane relief money is being spent. They want to stop money from going to certain groups. The government has offered to help defray the cost that faith-based groups have incurred in helping victims of the hurricanes. Many have been able to cover costs through donations of goods, money, and volunteers. But in many cases, these groups help more people than they were capable of helping because the government asked them to.

But to serve an extremist agenda, some have called on the government to ban faith-based groups from the publicly funded relief effort. Their call would shut out the poor in churches and synagogues and mosques simply to suit their erroneous reading of the Constitution and to pad their fundraising numbers.

First, they want to keep poor kids in big cities from going to good schools with scholarship vouchers, now they want to stop aid from going to the poor. So much for compassion.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO SIT UP AND LISTEN

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, Cindy Sheehan and hundreds of thousands of opponents of the war in Iraq marched here in Washington, D.C. The massive outpouring of public demonstration against the war is reflected in national polls showing America's growing dissatisfaction with the President's Iraqi policy.

In the spring of 2003, the President pushed our Nation into a war in Iraq. The decision was not based on proven terrorist threat or WMDs, but President Bush's private agenda.

Two years ago, the American people had spent over \$250 billion in Iraq. What do we have to show for it? Not much except for the growing insurgency, close to 2,000 American deaths, and untold innocent Iraqi lives.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush's adventure in Iraq has been an abysmal failure. People such as Cindy Sheehan, who have made a mother's ultimate sacrifice, are speaking out. The President will not listen, but it is time for Congress to sit up and listen.

HURRICANE RESPONSE

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this month of September 2005 has seen our Nation suffer the ravages of the largest natural disaster in our history and a second hurricane of remarkable power, Katrina and Rita. All Americans extend their hearts and their hands and their hopes to those whose

lives have been so drastically disrupted.

In Congress, our responsibility must be to ensure that the money that we have provided for the relief efforts is spent only on relief and recovery efforts. That is why Congress will send a special team of investigators to the Gulf region to monitor disaster expenditures.

That is why Congress will convene oversight hearings to learn from high administration officials, State officials and local folks on the status of the relief efforts and where the funds are being expended. That is why weekly reports on expenditures are mandated by Congress and why ongoing audits and investigations on disaster assistance are being conducted.

Mr. Speaker, recovery efforts will take time and the Federal Government will be there to support the local and State leaders, but anything we do we must do so in a fiscally responsible way.

HONORING BAILEY GOFORTH

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special constituent of mine, Miss Bailey Goforth, a 7-year-old from Alexander County, North Carolina, a bright young lady who is wise far beyond her years.

On Saturday, July 16 of this year, Bailey's father, David, became pinned beneath a heavy farm implement while attempting to hook up a bush hog to his tractor. Bailey was the person who discovered him. Rather than panic at the sight of her injured father, she acted in a calm and collected manner. She and her younger sister, Ali, tried to phone their grandparents for help but unfortunately they could not reach them.

That is when Bailey sprinted to her family's garage, retrieved a car jack, and followed her father's instructions on how to free him from beneath the bush hog. Her father sustained a broken left leg, but his injuries could have been far worse if his brave young daughter had not come to his rescue.

Mr. Speaker, Bailey Goforth is to be commended for her bravery, determination and sound judgment. She is truly an inspiration for us all.

TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR FEMA

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, over the past few minutes, beginning with the great prayer from our Chaplain, we have been talking about the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. And we know that immediately following Hurricane Katrina, Speaker HASTERT called along with Senator