

but boy, did our population spurt. If we had an ordinate on the other side with population curve on it, it would follow. It would pretty faithfully follow this increase in energy production.

Once we are through the age of oil, and we will one day be through the age of oil, and thinking about this, I often think about my father, who was a little boy in Kentucky. He remembered the first one-cylinder gasoline engine that came into Lincoln County, Kentucky. He died in 1985. He lived within a score of years, roughly halfway, through the age of oil.

What is the carrying capacity of the earth minus this incredible resource we have in gas and oil? I want to, for a moment, give you a couple of illustrations of how important this gas and oil has been to our life and our economy.

Just 1 barrel of oil, the refined product you can buy now, is just a little over \$100. Forty-two gallons, a little over \$100 at a pump will buy you the work output of 12 people working all year for you in manual labor, and you buy it for \$100. To give some sense, if this is probably correct, reflect on how far a gallon of diesel or gasoline, and I was drinking a little bottle of water last evening and drove by a service station and noted the \$2.45 gas, and I paid more for my bottle of water than for that in the grocery store. So gasoline is still cheaper than water.

But reflect on how far that little gallon of gas takes your car or your SUV and how long it would take you to pull it through. Now, I drive a Prius. I get about 50 miles per gallon, but it would take me a long time to pull my Prius 50 miles. I could get it there with a come-along and hooking to the guard-rail or tree, but it would take me a long time.

Another little indication of the incredible quality of these fossil fuels is electricity. If I work really hard at manual labor all day long, I can get more mechanical work out of an electric motor for less than 25 cents worth of electricity. That may be humbling to recognize that I am worth in terms of manual labor less than 25 cents a day, as compared to the energy we can get from fossil fuels.

Future historians, after the age of oil, may very well wonder how we could have done this, how we could have found this incredible resource, one barrel of which provides you the work output of 12 people working for you all year long, incredible wealth, how we could have found this and not have stood back and asked ourselves the question, what are we going to do with this? How could we get the most good to the most people for the longest time out of this enormous wealth that we found under the ground? But that is not what we did. Like children that found the cookie jar, we just pigged out. I wonder what future generations will say about us.

Well, our time is running out, and there are so many other things I would like to talk about. Let us look at the

chart that says where we go to now, and we will transition ultimately, Mr. Speaker, to renewables. Geology will demand it. We either do it because we are running out of readily available, high quality gas and oil, or we do it on our schedule which will be a kinder, gentler schedule.

These are the alternatives. We have some finite resources: the tar sands, the oil shales, the coal. We talked about coal. Nuclear, light water reactors, feeder reactors, fusion. If we ever get to fusion, we are home free; low odds, I think. These will only tide us over for a while. Then true renewables, which now represent, as the next chart shows us, tiny percentages of our total energy production.

We are very much like a young couple that has gotten married and their grandparents have died and they have got a big inheritance and they have established a lavish lifestyle where 85 percent of the money they spend comes from their grandparents' inheritance, and only 15 percent from their work. They look at the reserves and their inheritance and how much they are spending, and it is going to run out. So they have got to do one of two things. Either they have got to make some more money if they want to continue that lifestyle, or they are going to have to change that lifestyle. That is exactly where we are.

I use those numbers because 85 percent of our current energy use comes from coal, petroleum and natural gas, and these are not all renewables, by the way. They are alternatives. Nuclear is a bit more than half. Other people may have only 6 percent for the renewables. This chart uses seven. These renewables, seven are blown up, and you see that the biggest contributor there is conventional hydro. It is not going to grow in our world. Wood, that is, the paper industry and timber industry, wisely using a waste product, and then solar, winds, agricultural, geothermal, alcohol from fuel is part of agricultural, and energy from waste, that is a big one that should grow and could grow.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to transition to these, and we will, I shouldn't say if. We are going to. We are going to transition, but if we are going to do that as painlessly as possible, we need today a very aggressive program. Time is running out. The Hirsch report says that. The study by the Corps of Engineers says that. Common sense says that. If we are at peak oil, where is the energy going to come from to invest in the alternative?

We need a program, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that has the dimensions of putting a man on the moon and the urgency of the Manhattan project. I think it can be very challenging. I think Americans will rise to the challenge. I think Americans will feel good about victory gardens, about getting cars that have high mileage, about two and three going together in a car. Life is so easy today that I think Ameri-

cans would be challenged, that they would feel really good about making a contribution.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is a national commitment to a program that has the commitment of putting a man on the moon and the urgency of the Manhattan project. If we do that, Mr. Speaker, I think we can have a relatively smooth transition and Americans feel good about their contribution.

GULF COAST DISASTER RECOVERY CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MELANCON. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight. With the recent events that have occurred over the past seven, eight months, since Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma have hit the gulf coast of the United States, in the recent week, a group of us got together, and we have set up the Gulf Coast Disaster Recovery Caucus to basically try to make sure that this Congress and America and this administration do not forget the disaster and the catastrophe that has occurred and inundated people all along the gulf coast.

It is not just a New Orleans thing. It is Louisiana, across the entire breadth of the State. It is Mississippi, across the entire coastal area. It is Alabama, it is Texas and it is Florida, on the west coast this time.

I look at the news articles and such. I have had some concerns with some of the statements that have been made in the past about being below sea level, the honesty and the integrity of elected officials in Louisiana. It really bothers me because I do not see the monies, the \$85 or \$87 billion that have been attested to be sent to the gulf coast in the hands of the people that need it, in the hands of the victims. There has been billions of dollars that have gone around that are somewhere between Washington, D.C., and the gulf coast of the United States, and I can tell you, it has not gotten to the people that are in need.

If you look at some of the instances of what is going on, parish governments that want to retain their own contractors cannot get what the cost of the Corps of Engineers and FEMA are paying to their contractors, and it is believed on best information that that price may be double to triple what is being paid by the local contractor, by the local government who is doing the job faster, better, and apparently, we believe, if we can ever get the numbers, more efficiently.

\$4.2 billion has just been approved to gravel a 172-acre parking lot for mobile homes in Hope, Arkansas. Now, that goes on top of the \$25,000 a month paid to the city of Hope, Arkansas, and I am

glad for the city of Hope, Arkansas, because if it is like rural American towns, it needs every dime of income it can use to sustain itself. But we have got over 11,000 trailers that are stationed there, 450 miles to the closest disaster parish or county, and there is 11,000 trailers up there that FEMA tells us they cannot put in a flood zone.

Well, the hurricane does not hit in the mountains. The hurricane does not hit in the desert. The hurricane hits along the coastal areas of this United States, and that is what these hurricanes have done.

They put up this morgue, a temporary morgue, FEMA did, in Coralville, Louisiana, \$17 million, and now it is abandoned. \$5.2 million, this was really nice, was spent getting a contract to a contractor that did not exist, and if it would not have been for the Justice Department seeing that these folks were cashing checks for \$10,000 at a time, that they bought a brand new mobile home and three brand new automobiles, then we would still probably be out about \$5.2 million. Then when they started to doing the work, it had to be turned over to the fire department and another contractor to get the job done.

Congressman PICKERING told me today, and I think I recall it is either 90 or 95 percent of all the moneys are being contracted for debris removal and cleanup in Mississippi is going to contractors from outside the State. I can tell you, I get calls daily in my offices from people that are local that have been trying to get jobs, and then those that seem to be able to get some work, which is the bottom tier, are waiting months for their money.

I have one contractor that has been waiting for \$50 million because the FEMA people or the State advanced the parish in which they are working some moneys right after the storm, about \$30 million. This contractor is not getting his money, and in good faith, he has been working since day one, and has not gotten his money to pay his people and to run his company because the State and FEMA say that the parish that he is working in has not accounted for every dime.

□ 2100

And yet they have assured, the State and the contractor can document that he has not received a nickel from the parish, yet he is held up. There is another contractor across the river in Plaquemines Parish; they are to the tune of \$6 million waiting. I have a guy in my hometown that is a very small company, he is waiting on about \$150,000. And let me tell you, for a little, small independent guy like that, that is crushing him. That is killing him.

After the Florida hurricanes, three of them a year and a half ago, under section 32, the Department of Agriculture invoked section 32 of Ag Stabilization Act of 1935 and allowed the Secretary at his discretion to start reimbursing

and helping those farmers that were in the category covered by section 32 to give them disaster assistance and get them back working.

On October 28, the Department of Agriculture finally invoked section 32. That is 2 months afterward. And to this day, the \$250 million that they allowed, out of 780 in the account that has been appropriated for this year, zero has hit the ground in any one of the States that was impacted by any of these hurricanes. No disbursement whatsoever.

The caucus was set up in hopes of doing several things. One is making sure that the people that lived and worked and want to return to their homes will have that opportunity; to make sure that we provide and that this government provides for the safety of these people, protecting their communities, so they can rebuild their families, their homes and their businesses and trying to provide housing and rebuilding and repairing those houses so people can return home.

We need to get the economy back up. We need to create jobs and rejuvenate the entire coastal region, from Galveston Bay to Mobile Bay and all around down in the Tampa area where Wilma hit.

Health care is nonexistent for those that need it in the Orleans area. If you have a broken arm and you need surgery, you better get to another city. If you have cancer, you better get to another city. If you have anything that requires long-term health care, you better get to another city, because health care is in jeopardy in south Louisiana.

The doctors are like any other businessmen, they have to make a living. They cannot make a living if the customers or the clients or the patients, however you want to refer to them, are not back. And the hospitals can't keep themselves running when people are coming to them with injuries with no hospitalization coverage and they are required to take these people into the hospital to take care of them. And then, of course, when they are hurt, to give them a bed, which becomes a free bed. And you have hospitals that have used every dollar of their reserves and are getting ready to fold up and go under.

Education: families won't bring their kids back unless there are schools to attend. We have tried and we are trying. In Chalmette, they have the school system back up very quickly. Of an 8,000 student population, there was 800 the first day. They are hopeful the folks will come back. But one school has pre-K through high school, and they are working with what little they have.

We need to make sure that we respond to the Americans that have been injured, that we do everything in our power. If we can rebuild infrastructure in Iraq, schools, mosques, public buildings, private facilities, spend \$100 million on a marsh area to bring it back to life, then surely we can spend some of

our money and these taxpayers' money to help them get back on their feet.

The people in my district, the people of the gulf coast are not looking for a handout. They are just looking for a helping hand, and this government owes those folks that.

Madam Speaker, I yield time to Mr. JEFFERSON first.

Mr. JEFFERSON. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Madam Speaker, we, as we talk about conditions in Louisiana and Mississippi tonight, we don't want this Congress or the people of America to believe that we are ungrateful for the help that we have already received. We are deeply grateful for it. We appreciate it immensely, and it has been a huge help to our people.

But I think what is important to note is that the disaster that we were stricken with is so immense, so pervasive, so once-in-a-lifetime historic, that there is just so much to be done over such a long time to restore opportunity for people to have a chance to reclaim their lives.

So I want to start out by just talking a little bit so people can better understand the dimensions of our problem. If you can imagine that in your city, if your city were ours, and just to talk about New Orleans a minute, a city of 480,000-or-so people, and you woke up one morning and 80 percent of your city was underwater. Eighty percent of your schools, of your hospitals, of your playgrounds, of your homes, of your businesses were all underwater, and that the water didn't recede in a few hours or a few days or even a few weeks. It stayed there for several weeks. And it wasn't just a little water in your house, ordinarily it was 4 feet, 5 feet, 6 feet, and sometimes more than that, over the roof.

This happened in Orleans Parish, and it happened in St. Bernard Parish, where the whole place was obliterated. And it happened in Plaquemines Parish as well. And imagine that 1,000 or 2,600 of your people died from this storm and that another thousand are still missing and no one knows where they are, and families are still searching for them. Imagine that if you were in Mississippi that 200-or-so people lost their lives.

Imagine that if you counted up all the houses that were destroyed in Louisiana and this happened to you, there would be 220,000 houses destroyed, and about 61,000 in Mississippi, and that your people were trying desperately to get back home. They were looking for temporary quarters, and they were willing to live in FEMA trailers or wherever they could find a temporary abode, and there were 98,000. That is how many there are in Louisiana looking for a trailer now, and fewer than half of those requests have been filled. In Mississippi, some number in the 30,000 range were involved, and most of those have been filled.

Imagine if you had been waiting for electricity for your neighborhood for now 6 months and you didn't have it, for the most part. In Orleans Parish, a

little better than half of our folks have their places connected for electricity. A little better than that in Mississippi, but in our place it isn't true. Imagine if you were trying to figure how could you get your hands around your problem, build back your house, get yourself back together and your insurance company wasn't cooperating and they were denying claims left and right, and saying that your homeowner's policy didn't apply. If you didn't have flood insurance, then you had nothing. If you had flood insurance, then you had limits that would be much lower than would ordinarily be expected to be useful to help you build back.

Imagine you were counting on your government, FEMA, to come forth and give you some direction as to how you could build back your place, to what level you had to build back safely, and FEMA had not even given you preliminary elevations that you could use. Imagine if you now were paying rent in one place or a house note somewhere and had a house note to pay in Orleans Parish and you could not get back in your place to live and your bank was calling you at your homestead, your mortgage company saying we cannot carry this anymore; you have to figure out some way to pay it.

Imagine you wanted to get back home, and you had 5,000 hospital beds when you left, a hospital bed count, and now you only had a few hundred and you were worried about your family and your children getting back and having a place to go if they got sick or hurt or needed to see a physician. And all the physicians, a great number of them, are out of town, somewhere else themselves, victims of trying to make the place work.

Imagine if your city had, at the end of the storm, no tax base and your school board had no tax base, and your schools weren't open. That is the situation that you find yourself in not only the day after the storm or the week after the storm or a few months after, but now 6 months after. And not a whole lot has changed because the problems are just so complex and so large and so enduring.

Now, these are not problems that are going to go away overnight. Our country needs to know this. Our friends need to know that all that we have done so far is to start to address these issues, to make down payments on certain aspects of it, but it will be years and years and years before we actually get this done.

Now, imagine also that you were trying to figure how you could avoid having this ever happen to you again and you were looking for a way to secure yourself, and you knew that it would take a real commitment for hurricane protection measures to be taken. And you had taken a trip, as I have, to the Netherlands, other parts of the world, and you had looked around to see what people had done to secure themselves against hurricanes and storms. And you found out that this was technically

possible; that in the Netherlands people are living and have lived for 53 years, since their last calamity with a storm there that drowned their people.

For 53 years they have lived with a system of barriers and canals and pumping stations and dikes, as they call them, we call them levees, and dunes and all the rest; an integrated system of water management for flood protection. And they have done this for 53 years now without an incident that has required them to have any loss of life or property. They have spent \$18 billion over a long period of time to provide this security, and they were an economy of \$485 billion.

In our country, we haven't yet made a decision to support a system in our part of the world that might cost \$30 billion, \$40 billion, in an economy that is not \$485 billion, like theirs was, but is \$12.2 trillion, the largest economy in the whole world. Twenty percent of the world's wealth in our country and we haven't been able to make a decision to step up and find a way to use the technology that already exists to support our people and to make them safe over time and to avoid large expenditures in the future.

Because we all know one thing for sure: that while there may not be another terrorist attack on our shores, we may find a way to prevent that, there is no way to prevent these storms that are brewing in the Gulf of Mexico and that are coming more frequently, more ferocious than ever before, and that will be with us for years to come. We can secure ourselves against these storms if we build the coastal barrier protections that we need and if we build our wetlands back and our coastlines back, so that when these storms come, as ferocious as they may be, by the time they reach our population centers, they will be tamped down enough such that they can be handled by a levee system and other flood protection systems that are in place.

So we have made a lot of progress, but there is a great deal for us to do. And we are here tonight to highlight for the people of our country how much there is to be done and to ask them to stand with us and stay with us over this long period of time because it is going to take years and years to bring our people back.

And, look, folks aren't asking for our government to take care of them forever. They know, though, that they can't do this by themselves. Because no one has seen this kind of damage before in this country. It is a catastrophe beyond imagination. It has never happened anywhere on the face of America ever before to this extent, to this dimension.

So we are saying, give us a chance to help ourselves. Let us get back into our home places. Let us get back to the places we live and to the places that we want to live. Recognize the right that our people have to return, to restore their lives, the right to rebuild in their places, the right to reclaim their expe-

riences back home. We want our people back home. We need your help to get them back home, and they can live in New Orleans safely. They can live in our environment safely.

So when people ask this question of what should the footprint of New Orleans be, it is a misplaced question. The issue isn't where can we rebuild. Because we know from the experience of the Netherlands we can build anywhere. If they can live 15 feet below sea level, and in New Orleans we talk about 4½ feet at the lowest point, if they can secure themselves 15 to 20 feet below sea level, we can secure ourselves 4 and 5 feet below sea level in the lowest points.

We can have this vibrant city restored and have our people in a place to reclaim their lives, and for our city and our region to continue to be the force that it has been for our country in natural resource development and distribution throughout the country; our pipeline system, our oil and gas system that we have invested in across the gulf.

□ 2115

And for our fisheries, the provisions we make for our country and the work that we do with our port system that moves the goods from mid-America to the rest of the world, these are very important assets that New Orleans provides and our country cannot do without. We are extraordinarily valuable, not to mention our cultural contributions to this country.

We want to see the people of America understand how deep our problems are. That is why we have come to the floor tonight, to make that point to the people of this country and to our colleagues in Congress, many of whom we have had a chance to bring down our way, and many others we want to invite down so they can see for themselves what they need to do to help us.

I thank my colleague, Mr. MELANCON, for helping to bring this matter to the attention of the American people and giving us a chance to talk about it tonight. I am pleased to join with him and soon with Mr. GENE TAYLOR of Mississippi and our other colleagues.

Mr. MELANCON. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this hour, along with Mr. GENE TAYLOR and Mr. BILL JEFFERSON.

Sitting and listening to Mr. MELANCON and Mr. BILL JEFFERSON, I believe they have appropriately set the tone for why we are here tonight. I beg the indulgence of my colleagues, because we are obviously concerned about both what we have seen, who has been impacted, and what we can do better. For many of us who are members of the Gulf Coast Disaster Recovery Caucus, this has become a cause, a passion, and a desire to ensure that there is a final resolution for the people who are in need.

Let me just take a moment to acknowledge that this is Congressman BILL JEFFERSON's birthday. And of course we all know that the good news about birthdays is we have an opportunity to give back, and you have just seen Congressman JEFFERSON on the floor talking about the needs of his community.

I want to spend just a moment to thank Mr. MELANCON, Mr. BILL JEFFERSON and GENE TAYLOR. I have never seen more collegiate Members under the auspices or under the umbrella or under the pain of devastation.

Certainly there are other colleagues throughout Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, but in our caucus we have seen this unified team, and certainly Mr. THOMPSON, who is the ranking member of the Homeland Security Committee, has been very helpful to this team, but you all have been the voices of reason and strength, the voices who have refused to back down, yet trying to bring along Members from both sides of the aisle. I want to thank them, particularly as a Member from Texas where many of their constituents are, and seeing how hardworking and diligent so many of the survivors are in our community, wanting nothing more than to return to the quality of life, the love of their community, the service they have given to their community, more than anything.

Many are mourning the loss of loved ones, and still having to toil finding work, maybe temporary work, making sure their children are in school, seeking to get the necessary benefits, benefits for elderly parents and relatives that they are taking care of. And many have had to funeralize relatives.

Madam Speaker, 1,100, possibly more, had to be funeralized. How many of us saw or was able to glean what kind of place New Orleans was by having to bury and funeralize 1,100-plus individuals, and there are those who never found their loved ones.

I want to tip my hat to Mr. MELANCON, Mr. JEFFERSON and Mr. TAYLOR for continuing to press forward even in spite of the fact that there are many agenda items that take up the time of Members of Congress, but you are saying to us that the lives of our fellow Americans must be premier in our concern, and I am forever grateful. Texans are ever certainly grateful because as we fight for resources in the Gulf region, not in conflict and not in fist fight, but certainly in coordination and in collaboration.

So I rise today to sort of weave into this debate the needs of Louisiana and Mississippi, certainly Alabama to a lesser extent, but also to join with the State of Texas as a partner in the efforts that are necessary to be made.

Madam Speaker, just about 2 weeks ago, we joined with the delegation of 34 Members of Congress who saw fit to meticulously travel through three States and a number of different cities, and of course, we had the hospitality of Mr. MELANCON, Mr. JEFFERSON and Mr.

TAYLOR. We were able to see and hear firsthand not only local officials but real people.

One of the key elements that I want to raise tonight that really brought me to a degree of almost frustration, because when hardworking people do the right thing, when you follow the law, when you provide for your family, when you make sure you have insurance, when you pay your mortgages and pay your taxes and get up every morning and go to work, you should be able to rely on your local, State and certainly your Federal Government.

May I present my frustration in the context of visiting New Orleans and Mississippi and bending down and picking up a family picture, a mother holding her baby. When you go throughout these areas, you find the debris of life scattered about. A picture, teapot, a pink dress of a little girl blowing in a displaced closet, having been blown out of a house and sitting on the side of a road. This is the scene of broken hearts and broken lives for people who have tried to do everything that they thought was right.

One issue that brought great pain was at a stop by the side of a road where a family was in a trailer in Mississippi. It happened to be one of the law enforcement, our first responders of whom we are so proud. To hear him tell the story how he paid his insurance, how he gets a busy signal or no signal or a hang up, and how the insurance company tells him, almost like in the biblical times in the birth of Jesus Christ when Mary and Joseph were looking for places to give birth, and there was no room at the inn and they wound up in a manger. This man could find no relief.

None of his insurance policies, or the main one that he thought he had appropriately paid for and applied to, would provide him recovery. I hope, Mr. MELANCON, in the Disaster Recovery Caucus, one of the main issues will be to confront this catastrophe, this crisis that impacted Hurricane Rita victims as well, to be able to rely upon paying insurance and not having to read the fine print to be able to find out whether or not I am going to be covered or denied.

In fact, in going throughout the region, I did not find one person that said, oh, yes, my insurance has covered me. There was one denial after another, one lawsuit after another. Two women that I spoke to said they were still waiting for recovery.

This issue needs to be confronted by Congress. Democrats are taking the lead on this issue. We welcome the joining of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle because we rise today to focus on the needs of people, and we need to rush toward victory by helping individuals who are suffering.

Let me also say that today we stood together to speak against this question of the eviction of almost 40,000 families, we believe, tomorrow. If the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Dep-

uty Secretary of Homeland Security can hear our voices on the floor tonight, we are pleading with an extension of that eviction date. What will be said is we have extended it. In fact, I am looking at a time line hear that talks about October 25, November 15, December 15, November 23, December 12, January 9, and it says FEMA requires all evacuees staying in hotels and motels register for an authorization code by January 30, and then they went on to February 7 and then January 13. They were going to be kicked out, and now it has been extended.

Let me say one simple sentence. Why don't we extend the time to remain in place, if necessary, until the anniversary of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita tragedies. Why not just do that.

I want to conclude by mentioning these items, and I see we are joined by Ms. LEE, who has been very helpful on these issues, particularly on the Financial Services Committee, where we have gathered to try to work with that committee on the housing issue. So eviction from a place where you have no place else to go, where countless trailers are lost in Hope, Arkansas, but they are going to evict people from places where they have no place to go. I am asking America, does that make any sense to you?

I am standing here making a plea that even in the midnight hour, that we can get an early morning accountability or response from the Secretary of Homeland Security to extend for a couple more months the idea of those last individuals being able to live.

And I want to make sure that we have a response to the insurance debacle that has opened up a searing wound in America: Pay your dues, and you get smacked in the face.

And then I would like to ensure that we have accountability. What does that mean? I heard Mr. MELANCON say, and he was very astute in teaching us when we went down and met with a number of his constituents in his parishes and other areas where the local elected officials said: I just wanted to put our community to work. That is what I asked for. In fact, I went out front to ask the Army Corps of Engineers to ask whether we could put our community to work.

They said if you want anything done quickly, you better go the route we are taking and if you go that route, you will get things done quickly. But lo and behold, we did not know that our contractors would not get paid, our small contractors and minority-owned contractors would not get paid. We did not know that the large contractors would bill and bill and bill, and have excessive amounts of dollars, using of tax dollars, and none of that generating down to those who obviously are in need of those dollars.

So this is a plea for help to this Congress. It is also a plea to recognize that we do have a vehicle that I think will be enormously helpful. So I close by

just counting these points on the omnibus bill H.R. 4197, the Congressional Black Caucus bill, that I hope we will see all Members of Congress use as the vehicle to bring relief to the gulf region.

It has a one-time payment, like 9/11, to all of the survivors; down payment assistance for your new house or rebuilding; bankruptcy protection for individuals who are being asked to pay mortgages and pay taxes and being asked to pay credit cards when they have no money; and voting protection, so that we have satellite voting and the Voter Rights Act is implemented in the April 22 election, particularly in Louisiana.

□ 2130

Environmental cleanup, the opening of hospitals and clinics and mental health coverage for those who are suffering.

I, Mr. MELANCON, appreciate you bringing us here to, if you will, vocalize or, more importantly, galvanize our efforts, and our promise to those of you in the gulf region is certainly to continue to work. And as a Texan who will be addressing the supplemental, as we all will, to ensure that there is fair compensation for much of the work that we are doing in education and security in Texas, we are not going to stand against you. We are going to stand alongside of you, and we are going to make sure that our efforts are a unified voice because the relief of the gulf coast is unified not divided, and we can do this together. We can do better. We can do it for Americans, our fellow brothers and sisters.

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you, Congresswoman JACKSON-LEE. I truly appreciated you and the 23 other people that have joined the caucus that we formed up this past week before going home.

With that I would like to yield time to Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much. And let me begin by also thanking my colleagues from the gulf coast, of course, Mr. TAYLOR and Mr. JEFFERSON, and to you, Mr. MELANCON, for organizing this special order tonight. But also more importantly for staying on the front lines, helping your constituents and your communities recover and rebuild. Each of them has suffered tremendous personal loss from the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. But all of you have worked tirelessly to focus national attention on the Gulf Coast and to win the support of Congress and the President to provide more funding and more assistance.

Also, they continue to ask the tough questions, the tough questions in demanding accountability for this administration's failure to lead and coordinate the response to Katrina. They are a credit to their constituents, to our country, and you deserve our support and our thanks. Thank you, Mr. MELANCON.

Let me just say tonight, Madam Speaker, that we know the entire

world watched the wealthiest, most powerful country on earth, quite frankly, turn its back on those who couldn't afford to evacuate this horrific hurricane called Katrina. People were left to fend for themselves on rooftops trying to save their lives and the lives of their families. And the majority of these people were African American. And we cannot sweep under the rug the faces of those who were disproportionately abandoned by their government because unfortunately, today, 6 months after the storm, the majority of these people are still fending for themselves.

If we don't deal with this up front we will continue to be in denial about the unfinished business of America in addressing the issues of race and class.

Now, 2 months ago, I had the opportunity to visit New Orleans and Mississippi as part of the first congressional field hearing which was held in the gulf coast. We toured New Orleans. We saw the Ninth ward, New Orleans East, Lakeview and other areas. We went to Mississippi and passed through Waveland, Bay St. Louis and Gulfport. And I tell you, like others who have visited the region, it takes a visit to the region to really fully understand the impact and the devastation that this hurricane brought upon the people of that region.

We saw firsthand this devastation and quite frankly, I will never, ever be able to sleep as well ever again in life based on what I saw during those 2 days.

We heard from victims of the storm who lost their homes and were displaced, who were living with friends and relatives or staying in hotels or motels mostly waiting for their FEMA trailers. They wanted to know that they would have a place to stay so that they could call someplace, just someplace their own. They wanted to know that FEMA wouldn't terminate housing assistance for people living in motels or hotels. They wanted to know that they wouldn't be discriminated against in seeking housing because of their race, ethnicity, age or disability. They wanted to know that the levees would be rebuilt so that they could go back to their homes and their communities to rebuild. And they wanted to know that they wouldn't be evicted from their homes or be gouged.

And we heard of the price gouging over and over and over again. And they wanted us to help them to make sure that they would not be gouged by the high rental prices or that some opportunistic developer wouldn't buy up their land and gentrify their communities. And they wanted to know that they would be hired to carry out Federal contracts to clean up and rebuild the gulf so that they could work, they could work and get a steady paycheck and participate in the equitable development of the region. They wanted to know that their kids could go back to school and still be children. And they wanted to know that they could go to a clinic or a hospital if they got sick.

In short, they wanted to know that they mattered and that their government would do all that it could to take care of them and put them back on their feet quickly.

And, Madam Speaker, the survivors of Hurricane Katrina are still wondering the exact same things today. 6 months after Katrina, virtually nothing has changed. Only now, our government is about to add insult to injury by disenfranchising over 300,000 displaced survivors from New Orleans, who will not be given the right to vote in elections that will determine the future of their city.

And tomorrow, we have learned that FEMA will boot out probably another 7,000 families that are still living in hotels and motels and have no other place to go.

This is a disgrace. The administration failed to prepare a plan of action to respond to Hurricane Katrina, and they have failed to put together a coherent plan to rebuild and restore the gulf coast region.

H.R. 4997, a comprehensive bill to help the gulf coast rebuild, which is supported by Katrina survivors and introduced by the Congressional Black Caucus under the leadership of Congressman MEL WATT should be supported. This bill provides for housing rights, a victim restoration fund in the spirit of 9/11 Victims Fund, expanded opportunities in rebuilding the gulf coast and voting rights for all.

We also work very closely with Mr. BAKER and improved upon his will to rebuild New Orleans and to help the region recover; got bipartisan support in the Financial Services Committee for that bill. But the administration has rejected both of these plans.

And now we are 3 months away from the start of the new hurricane season. And we can not afford to allow the continued incompetence of this administration to hinder the recovery and rebuilding process any longer.

Tomorrow, when we vote on the supplemental appropriations bill, I will offer an amendment to basically block FEMA from using, any money to evict people living in hotels or motels as a result of Katrina. We should not allow FEMA to kick people out on the streets. That is just plain and simple. That should not be done. So I urge my colleagues to support my amendment.

And we must continue to stand with the people of New Orleans and gulf coast and send a clear signal to the rest of the world that we must take care of all people. We must put people first regardless of their race or their income or their age or their disability. We have got a lot of work to do, and we don't have a lot of time to do it, Madam Speaker.

And so I just want to thank my colleagues from the region for their tenacity, their continued support for staying strong in the midst of a storm and for allowing those of us from other areas to try to help and try to do something.

I am very proud of my congressional district, immediately raised money to

send to the gulf coast region and to New Orleans. The Ninth Congressional District, like other Congressional Districts and other non profit organizations and charitable groups, should be commended for stepping up to the plate.

But our government must do more and we must do more now.

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you, Congresswoman LEE. I want to try, and of course we are getting towards the end of the hour, and Congressman JEFFERSON and I were hoping to have a few minutes.

I want to thank leadership for their assistance in trying to provide us with time so that we can make the issues known to the Members of Congress that are going to be voting on these issues.

This is not just a Louisiana thing. This is not just a New Orleans thing. This is an issue for the entire gulf coast. These are Americans, good tax paying citizens who have been left, not because they didn't buy the insurance that they were told to buy by their local government, by their insurance agent, by FEMA itself, the mortgage lenders. They bought those things. They did, they paid their taxes. They cared for their homes and now they are totally gone, with insurance companies saying no coverage, that is flood, and many of those houses being outside of flood zone.

Mr. JEFFERSON can attest to a lot of those issues being from New Orleans and my having Chalmette and South Plaquemines Parish. I would like to yield a little time to Mr. JEFFERSON.

Mr. JEFFERSON. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I think it is important to make a point here that often gets lost in these discussions. We did suffer a tremendous natural disaster in our region. But so much of what happened to our people, and what really drowned our city was not the storm itself, but the deluge that came from the breakage of our levees. Our levees gave way because they weren't designed, constructed or maintained properly. This was a Federal responsibility. This was the responsibility of the Corps of Engineers. And therefore, when we talk about the responsibility of our government now to make an appropriate addressing of these issues, it is important to understand that we are asking a government that, in large part, caused the loss and devastation there to step forward now and help us to fix it.

And so our position isn't just that we are victims of a natural disaster alone, but that we are also victims of a man-made disaster made by the men and women who were responsible for building, designing and maintaining our heavy system. And so there is an additional responsibility for this government to come to our aid, not just because we are victims of a storm, but because they had a hand in bringing about the devastation and destruction that occasioned us.

Had it not been for the drowning of our city, we wouldn't be here talking about these issues today in large part. Yes, there would be some overtopping of levees and there would be some flooding, but there would be nothing like the devastation that we witnessed and our people are enduring now. So let us not forget the main reason for our being here. It is because our area was flooded. Flood water stood for many, many weeks because our levees did not hold, after the government told us that they would, assured us that they would.

As Mr. MELANCON says, they told people they didn't even have to take flood insurance in many cases because the levees were going to prevent any flooding there. And they did not do that. And so I think we have a moral high ground here with respect to our demand of our government, and not just because we are citizens and taxpayers. That is enough in itself, but because the government had a big hand in bringing about the catastrophe that struck our people.

Our city drowned. Our region drowned because our levees failed. And that was the responsibility of our Federal Government.

And I think, Mr. MELANCON, people are coming to realize that now. And they can't embarrass us to say you are just coming as victims asking for more and more. The government did this to us as much as anyone else did, much more than it just being a natural disaster for. We have a right to demand that our government set things right.

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you, Mr. JEFFERSON.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, for a minute please.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me if I might, join and just reaffirm, Mr. JEFFERSON, what you said one of the reasons, because I come from the gulf coast region. And I really think that as we work in this caucus, Mr. MELANCON, we really should focus on the educating of our Congress on the problems or the distinctiveness of the gulf region, which I think America should be proud of its regional diversity.

Tragically, this past weekend we had a number of tornados, I believe, or windstorms throughout the Midwest, loss of life, a loss of property. These are regional climatic issues that come about.

And so I suffered too. Houston is 50 feet underwater. We were almost in the eye of Hurricane Rita. And we don't have exactly levees, but we have bayous and our bayous have tended to overflow, and we have needed the reconstruction of our bayous.

So I think it is important that as we look at the other social needs, the housing and electricity, that we really need to have a separate massive agenda, infrastructure, Army Corps, Department of Transportation, Homeland Security, all the elements that deal

with the infrastructure of helping to safely secure the gulf region, all along. And Florida is likewise included, having suffered so many of the hurricanes. We really need that agenda.

And let me finish on this point that I indicated I would make clear. We discussed earlier about the voting, just or in a moment, and this goes directly to the April 22 voting. And I don't want my colleagues and others to think, you know what? They are going to let those people who live in New York and Utah and Houston, they are going to let them vote twice. They are living there and then they are trying to get them to vote in New Orleans.

Well, I don't want, if I might use this terminology, for anyone to apply to us the okey-dokey. We are not here standing talking about any fraudulent activities or any suggestion that anyone is voting twice or in two different places. We know under the law that you can choose your residency, and where you choose your residency to be, that is where you will be allowed to vote.

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When you pool the thousands of individuals in Houston, and I would imagine elsewhere, they will say to you that they are residents of Louisiana and that is where they want to vote. And that is why, as I yield back, our argument is to have the voting rights protection, to allow residents of Louisiana where they might live, one, to have satellite voting where they might live, but also to ensure them the right to vote, one vote, one person.

Mr. MELANCON. Let me see if Congressman JEFFERSON and I can wrap it up. If you use the cost-ratio method that the Corps of Engineers used for projects, and what many Federal and State agencies use to determine whether there is value in investments into areas, the resources and the area that was destroyed, and this is just Louisiana, I am not talking about Mississippi and Texas and Alabama now.

Thirty percent of the United States's energy comes from Louisiana offshore oil fields, straight through the state of Louisiana. 30 percent of the United States seafood comes through Louisiana. 42 percent of every commodity that is exported from this country goes through the Port of New Orleans. And that does not count the other three or four ports that are located on that river.

This city, this region, this southern port of our country is an important part that needs to be revived, needs to be helped back along. We can put money into projects, as I said, rebuilding other countries when they are having problems. We have got to be able to do this for ourselves.

There are a lot of folks that wrap themselves in the American flag and their politics, they are patriots, I am a patriot. There are a lot of people that espouse religion in their politics. And I say to those folks, what would Jesus do?

I do not think that he would leave these people wanting. This is not black, this is not white, this is not rich, this is not poor, this is not Republican, nor is it Democrat, it is about Americans that have been hurt and need the help of the citizenry, their fellow citizens to get back on their feet.

There are people returning to their communities and starting to do the planning in spite of the fact that they cannot get answers to the questions of how high, and when, and is anybody going to do anything at all?

There is resiliency in the people of the gulf coast. They are going to come back one way or another. It is going to be a tough bill. It is going to take time. It would take time whether the Government helped or not. But it sure would make it a whole lot better in my mind for other countries in the world to say Americans help each other.

I yield to Mr. JEFFERSON.

Mr. JEFFERSON, Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. MELANCON for yielding to me. I want to say how grateful he and I are for the bipartisan approach that was made in our region just a few weeks ago when the Speaker of the House and our Democratic leader, Mr. HASTERT and Ms. PELOSI, came together and worked together in that region to address some of the issues we are talking about tonight and to bring to the attention of the American people how crucial it is that all of us pull together for this region.

As Mr. MELANCON has said, it is a very important region to our Nation. And so it is not just a matter of helping the folks of Louisiana, it is a matter of helping people across this country. Yes, our folks are strewn in 44 States around the country, but we are not talking about that sort of a national problem, we are talking about one where we actually, the country needs our region and we need our country to come to our aid so we can continue to supply these vital services to the rest of the people of our Nation.

I believe that if someone were to take a poll, Mr. MELANCON now, and ask people of this country whether they were standing with New Orleans and with our region and wanted to see us brought back, wanted to see our country helped, I think they would all say yes to that.

We just have to get the message here to the Members of Congress that people out there want to see us rebuild, want to see us recover. And if we keep this measure in front of them, the American people will see us through this. So a part of our mission here tonight is to make sure that the American people understand how deep and abiding and enduring our issues are, and to inform their Members of Congress how much we need their continuing help on a bipartisan basis to see us through this set of problems.

I think it is good for our region, it is imperative for our country, and it is the way that we ought to address these issues. We cannot go out with credi-

bility with the rest of the world and say we are going to fix their issues, their problems, their infrastructure requirements, and not say the same thing for our people here at home with any credibility.

So I thank Mr. MELANCON for what he has done to arrange this. I thank Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE for her contribution tonight, for Congresswoman LEE, and for all of our colleague who have joined us in this colloquy tonight. I appreciate the opportunity that the House has given us to bring this message to the people of our country.

Mr. MELANCON, Madam Speaker, in closing, the days immediately following the storm in Katrina, before Rita even came and devastated southwest Louisiana and eastern Texas, the only way I can get to Chalmette and St. Bernard Parish was by boat on the river. And when I got there, I met the sheriff.

And they were organizing people they were lifting off the roofs at the port facility referred to as the Chalmette Slip. And all of these people, they had lined up about 200 people putting life jackets on them, putting them on a barge to bring them across the rivers to what is known as Algiers Point in hopes that there would be buses there could take them to a good place, because nobody really knew whether the buses would come and where they would ultimately end up.

But we gave them two MREs and we put them on the barge and we sent them out to Algiers Point, one we said for supper tonight with a bottle of water, one for breakfast in the morning with a bottle of water and let's just hope that the buses will get there.

And as the sheriff and I said goodbye to these folks, the first guy that was in line looked at the sheriff and looked, and he said, Sheriff, you know me, told him his name. He says you know my brother, Joe. You know where we live. Joe drowned. Do not forget him.

The next person in line was a lady who just burst into tears and hugged the sheriff and she was excited. She thought she was going somewhere. I do not know where that lady is today. She may be in a hotel somewhere waiting to see when she can get back home.

The third person, this guy was standing there with a plastic grocery bag in his hand. And the sheriff said, I see you have got your lunch already. And he told the sheriff, this is not my lunch, this is all I have left now. My house went under 20 feet of water, at least that is about how high my roof is.

There are people that have suffered tremendously. We talked about the voting rights. I think there is enough safeguards. I believe that if America can spend millions of dollars to help Iraqis vote in this country for transitional government and elect officials in their country, then surely we can safeguard and make sure that Americans, regardless of where they are from, can vote in the elections in the commu-

nities of their choice where they reside, where they want to reside, where they want to return to.

In closing, I can only say that what we have done, while it is a good beginning, and every bit that is parceled out to the southern coastal States, we are thankful for. But this is far beyond the capacity of people or individuals to comprehend without physically seeing what is down there.

I do not care if it is Biloxi, Mississippi, New Orleans, Louisiana, Venice, Louisiana, Bayou LaBatre, Alabama, it does not matter, if you go and you see you will understand.

It is inexplicable to try and describe it. I encourage, as I did with the leadership, when the CODEL came down to Louisiana, every Member of this Congress to go down there. If you make the trip, if you see the areas that were hit, and if you do not feel differently about trying to help these Americans, then there is nothing more that I can do.

I want to thank the leadership for allowing us the time. My job I feel is to keep this issue in front of the American public, because the gulf coast area is not back up on its feet and still needs quite a bit of help. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4939, EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE, THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE RECOVERY, 2006

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma (during the Special Order of Mr. MELANCON) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-391) on the resolution (H. Res. 725) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4939) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

IMMIGRATION REFORM IS NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING, Madam Speaker, I would first like to start out by saying that I appreciate the opportunity to listen to the delegation, particularly the representatives from Louisiana and gentlemen from Texas and California, their remarks on how bad it is down there in the gulf coast.

Madam Speaker, I have made three trips down there myself, two of them on my own and another with a transportation CODEL. And the first one was the September 10 through September 12 when New Orleans was 70 percent underwater.

The second one was October 4 where we saw most of the coastline, all of the way through Biloxi and all of the way