

the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6033.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 2864, WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 2864) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and request a conference with the Senate thereon.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR.
MELANCON

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Melancon moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill H.R. 2864 be instructed to agree to provisions that will provide protection to communities located in the coastal area of Louisiana and Mississippi from the storm surge of a category 5 hurricane.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I come here today in support of building a comprehensive hurricane protection system for the gulf coast. For years we in Congress have focused on various wants for our constituents. Today we have the opportunity to focus on the Nation's needs.

Earlier this year, I introduced in Congress the Meeting Authorization Requirements for Our Coast, or MARC, Act. This legislation would have authorized a comprehensive hurricane protection system for the gulf coast. Today's motion is a continuation of that effort.

Building a hurricane protection system that can protect our coastal citizens and businesses from category five hurricanes is the most important need in the U.S. Gulf Coast States. In Louisiana alone there are currently 200,000 people that have no protection, zero, from the next deadly hurricane. If Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana just a few miles to the west, the devastation would have been like nothing you have seen on TV, and building a category five hurricane protection system will save the lives of these people in future events.

But a comprehensive hurricane protection system is also vital to supporting and safeguarding our Nation's energy supply. Louisiana has a long and distinguished history of oil and gas production, both on and offshore. Among the 50 States, we are first in crude oil production, second in natural gas production, and second in total energy production. Currently, approximately 34 percent of the Nation's natural gas supply and almost 30 percent of the Nation's crude oil supply is either produced in Louisiana, produced offshore Louisiana, or moves through the State and its coastal wetlands. Together with the infrastructure in the rest of the State, this production is connected to nearly 50 percent of the total refining capacity of this entire country.

Based on its energy-producing value to the Nation, acre for acre, Louisiana is the most valuable real estate in the Nation. Louisiana has 17 petroleum refineries, most of them large, world-scale facilities. These refineries have a combined crude oil distillation capacity of approximately 2.77 million barrels per day, which is 16.2 percent of the total U.S. refinery capacity of 17.1 million barrels a day, the second highest in this Nation. Two of the four Strategic Petroleum Reserve storage facilities are in south Louisiana along our coast. Just last week Chevron announced it discovered a deepwater oil and gas field off Louisiana's coast that could account for as much as 50 percent of our Nation's known reserves. The field would be largely serviced by Louisiana ports, ports that remain highly vulnerable. Louisiana is crucial to all parts of America because of its working "energy coast," and we need your help.

Supporting our Nation's energy needs has come at a price. In the past century, Louisiana has lost 1.2 million acres of coastal wetlands and barrier islands and stands to lose hundreds of thousands more acres if measures to stop the loss are not taken. That is a football field of land every 38 seconds along our vanishing coast. Without this protected buffer, Louisiana's people, businesses, and energy infrastructure are much more vulnerable to storm surges and hurricane-related flooding.

Comprehensive hurricane protection combined with coastal restoration will offer truly adequate hurricane protec-

tion necessary to protect the lives of over 2 million residents, over 50 percent of the State's population, and the entire infrastructure that supports our Nation's energy needs.

Some of my colleagues might question the cost of a comprehensive hurricane protection system. In response I say that you can pay now or you can pay much higher later. You can pay to build a category five protection system today or you could pay later with a disrupted national energy supply, ruined businesses, lives lost, and hundreds of billions of dollars of recovery costs to the citizens of this country.

The gulf coast has worked tirelessly and quietly for generations to provide the rest of the Nation with energy and transportation services needed to keep industry around the country on pace. Only now in this time of need does the gulf coast ask for something back, a category five hurricane protection system to protect lives, property, and energy production for future storms.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am delighted we are moving to conference on the Water Resources Development Act. This is a very important piece of legislation that makes investments all around America. The projects in these bills will reduce transportation costs, protect our homes and businesses from damaging floods, and improve our environment for a better quality of life. The Water Resources Development Act is important legislation for the entire country.

The people of Louisiana and Mississippi suffered greatly from Hurricane Katrina last year. A great deal has been done by the Army Corps of Engineers to restore the hurricane protection works in the New Orleans area, but there is still much to do.

While I support the motion to instruct, I believe we have to recognize that there will be residual risk associated with any hurricane protection project we build. New Orleans needs to consider smart ways to rebuild that put fewer of their citizens at risk.

We also must recognize that the damaging effect of a hurricane is not measured strictly by its category, which basically measures wind speed. Other factors such as how fast it moves, how much rain is associated with it, what direction it takes, and how big a storm surge it is able to generate all contribute to whether a category five hurricane will be catastrophic or just very bad.

We are talking about protecting an important and unique region of our country, but we also have only a slight understanding at this point of how much money we will need to spend. It will certainly be tens of billions of dollars. And I will remind Members that there are other great cities in America at risk of flooding, some at higher risk than New Orleans.

While I would hope that there will be serious urban planning going on at the

local level, I believe we need a well-thought-out plan for additional hurricane protection in this region of the gulf. It must be a comprehensive plan that also recognizes the navigation needs of one of America's great ports and waterways as well as the ecological importance of the coastal marshes.

I want to assure Mr. MELANCON that I will work in conference to make sure that the Corps of Engineers gets the authority it needs to provide the appropriate protection for coastal Louisiana and Mississippi.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, we were all horrified a year ago when New Orleans' levees broke under the force of the winds and storm surges caused by Hurricane Katrina. Katrina was at Category 3 strength when it made landfall that fateful day, yet it wrought destruction beyond our imagination. In the face of the devastation we witnessed, it borders on the absurd to consider authorizing levee funding for New Orleans at anything less than the Category 5 level. For that reason, I rise in strong support of the Melancon Motion to Instruct the WRDA conferees.

Mr. Speaker, past authorizations for hurricane protection took into account vast marshes and wetlands, as well as barrier islands that could absorb most of the force of tidal surges. Louisiana has lost 1.2 million acres of this land due to economic development in the past century, and stands to lose another 435,000 acres if measures to stop the loss aren't taken. Without this protective buffer, the people of Louisiana are that much more vulnerable to storm surges and other hurricane-related flooding.

Coastal and wetlands restoration combined with a strong levy system will offer the hurricane protection necessary to protect the lives of over 2 million residents and the nation's industries. However, we cannot rebuild all of the wetlands lost in the near term, so we must compensate with stronger, better levee protection. The Army Corps of Engineers has worked hard to bring levees back up to pre-Katrina standards, but we've already seen what that level of protection does—nothing. Anything less than Category 5 levee protection is totally inadequate and would be an insult to the memory of the more than 700 New Orleansians who lost their lives a year ago.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request the conferees on the Water Development Resources Act guarantee levee protection at a Category 5 level. Hurricane Katrina served as a stark reminder that our levee system in south Louisiana is inadequate. We are responsible for ensuring the safety of its residents, and today we can make a commitment that they are not forgotten.

The economic and environmental benefits that south Louisiana provides to the nation are substantial. Coastal Louisiana produces over 30% of our nation's seafood, including 50% of our shrimp crop. Our wetlands are home to over 79 endangered species and serve as a vital habitat for migratory birds. The network of interconnected waterways and presence of several major port facilities are an important hub in our maritime industry. Over 70% of the grain produced in the United States travels through the area. 30% of our domestic crude oil and 34% of our natural gas is produced by or travels through south Louisiana, making us a centerpiece in America's Energy Coast. In

addition to transporting much of our domestic oil supply, coastal Louisiana also refines 16% of our petroleum products. Knowing this, we must ensure that this valuable part of our nation's infrastructure remains intact and its people remain protected.

Our current levee system in New Orleans dates back to the 1960s, and since then our whole environment has changed. The loss of coastal barrier islands and the erosion of our wetlands have led to a weakened first line of defense against hurricanes. These islands and wetlands help absorb the storm's tidal surge and weaken the strength of an approaching storm. We are losing our wetlands at a rate of 25 to 30 square miles per year, while we are making areas further inland more susceptible to flooding. We have seen hurricanes become more powerful and more frequent as the years go by. The risk of hurricanes will always be present in south Louisiana, it is up to us to decide how to best mitigate their destructive impacts.

Looking at this situation, I am reminded of what I saw firsthand in the Netherlands. After the devastating North Sea floods of 1953, that nation committed itself to a system of water management projects that would ensure such a flood never happened again. Although the cost was high, their determination to provide absolute protection was justified. As a result, the Netherlands now has a significant number of its citizens living and produces 70% of its \$480 billion GDP in areas that are fifteen to twenty feet below sea level, safely protected by flood control projects. By comparison, the lowest areas of New Orleans are only four and a half feet below sea level. Protecting the city is not beyond our technological capabilities, it is simply a matter of making the commitment necessary to do so. While the cost may seem substantial now, it pales in comparison to the cost we would face in human and economic losses should another hurricane strike south Louisiana directly.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to get it right. We must ensure the safety of the city of New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf Coast, because we have seen the horrible effects of substandard, poorly designed, inadequate levee protection in the face of a powerful storm. A working flood control system for south Louisiana begins with sound levees. I urge the conferees to support levee protection against a Category 5 storm surge.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support Congressman MELANCON's motion to instruct conferees on H.R. 2864. This motion would direct conferees to accept provisions that will protect coastal communities in Louisiana and Mississippi from the storm surge of a category 5 hurricane.

Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf on August 29, 2005, and was a category 3 hurricane that did not even directly hit the affected areas.

Yet, Katrina was able to inflict monstrous and unimaginable damage upon Louisiana and the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. One year after Hurricane Katrina, the area remains a terrible, twisted portrait of lives and families and whole communities washed away; home by home, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina:

More than 1,000 people died.

The total number of immediately displaced people has never been determined. Estimates range from the hundreds of thousands to the millions.

The Louisiana parishes of Orleans and St. Bernard were especially hard hit by flooding, with an estimated 77% of Orleans's population affected, and nearly all residents of St. Bernard.

In Mississippi, 55% of Hancock County's population is estimated to have been affected by flooding and/or structural damage.

In the greater New Orleans area alone, there were 160,000 homes and apartments destroyed or heavily damaged by the storm.

The metro New Orleans area has lost approximately 400,000 residents.

The National Flood Insurance Program has paid out \$17 billion in property damage claims in Louisiana alone, only a fraction of total damage.

Hospital capacity in Orleans parish dropped in half immediately after the storm. In St. Bernard, there are still no hospitals open.

The Army Corps of Engineers has only begun to raise sinking levees and deal with unfinished hurricane protection and flood prevention projects. But, they're only rebuilding the levees to withstand a Category 3 storm, Katrina's level. Prudent planning and common sense would dictate that they be raised to Category 5 levels to protect the more than two million residents along these coasts.

I urge my colleagues to support and vote for this motion to instruct.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2784) to award a congressional gold medal to Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, in recognition of his many enduring and outstanding contributions to peace, non-violence, human rights, and religious understanding.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2784

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fourteenth Dalai Lama Congressional Gold Medal Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama—