

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House on the still-critical matter to the recovery of the gulf coast.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday President Bush vetoed the emergency supplemental passed out of this body that would have not only addressed the ongoing situation in Iraq, but would have provided the gulf coast with much-needed financial support and relief that would have allowed recovery and rebuilding to continue in a fairer and more equitable manner.

In doing so, he stated, among other things, that the bill contained things, he said, "billions of dollars in non-emergency spending that has nothing to do with fighting the war on terror." In this, I hope he did not contend that the hundreds of thousands of Katrina and Rita victims that were hit by the gulf coast storms in 2005 and whose recovery still depends on what we do here to a great extent is not an emergency issue.

While the main focus of the spending bill has been on our troops abroad, the bill vetoed yesterday would have done so much for the scores of people dealing with the aftermath of the 2005 storms 19 months later. Nineteen months after the storms our levees are still not fully repaired. \$1.3 billion for ongoing projects to repair levees and other water infrastructure in the New Orleans area was in the vetoed bill. With the start of the 2007 hurricane season less than a month away, levee repair is an emergency and urgent need.

Dillard University, Tulane University, Southern University and Xavier University were all under water after the storm. Nineteen months later, much of the infrastructure is still undone, and many of their professors are still out of town. The emergency spending bill would have provided \$30 million for our Education Department to provide assistance to institutions of this type and to incentivize the return of professionals to their campuses. It would have given a similar amount of \$30 million for our elementary and secondary schools to incentivize the return of professionals there and to get our schools jump-started where half of them remain shuttered after the storm.

The extension of the \$500 million social services block grant was also in the bill. This would have provided critical funding for social services, including programs for mental health, child welfare, and the treatment of addictive disorders. Thousands of citizens suffering from mental health disorders, drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, and who need care, have nowhere to go. They make our streets unsafe for themselves and for their neighbors.

The SBA is charged with the business of helping our economy recover, yet nearly half of our businesses and 40 percent of the tax base of the city is still not back. The supplemental would have allowed the SBA to use \$25 million in unobligated expenses to cover

administrative expenses relating to the SBA disaster loan program, thereby providing a total of \$140 million in fiscal year 2007 for that account.

The bill would have allowed for the forgiveness of community disaster loans, following this unprecedented devastation of our city government. We now have about 60 percent of our tax base back in place. The city, however, has had to borrow \$250 million, which we cannot pay back. This bill would have permitted forgiveness on those loans as it has for loans in disasters prior to ours.

With 225,000 of our people not back home, living day-to-day in other places, they live in a state of emergency every day without our borders and have done so for the last 19 months.

I realize that negotiations have begun on the new spending bill, but it is imperative that this portion of the bill that we are mentioning tonight, that helps our domestic issues related to Katrina, does not go untouched by this new negotiation. In fact, it remains untouched and must be included in the new spending bill that may be introduced shortly.

In vetoing this piece of legislation and proclaiming the gulf coast as a nonemergency, it is an exercise in unreality. It is no time for us to devise an exit strategy at home from the hurricane victims that are depending on our government to restore their lives. There must be a clear plan to rebuild here at home.

The administration labeled the supplemental unacceptable. Yet, let me remind the administration that it was not an act of God that flooded New Orleans. It was the negligence of the Corps of Engineers, a Federal agency, that drowned our city. It, therefore, is the responsibility of the government, since it broke it, to fix it.

To ignore the ongoing emergency in our area is unconscionable, and I urge this House and all who are watching to insist on the supplemental that we are going to follow with here, that it include continued support for the Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims of our area.

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

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

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IN MEMORY OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN 1ST LT. IRA O'NEAL, JR. (RET.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to an-

nounce the passing of a great American, Ira O'Neal, Jr., who happened to be my cousin, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen recently honored with the Congressional Gold Medal here in the Capitol.

Ira O'Neal was born in Phoenix, Arizona, on June 11, 1918. He was drafted into the 1st Army Corps in 1942, where he served in the 42nd Aviation Squadron as a first lieutenant.

In 1948, President Truman issued his famous executive order that racially integrated the military. At the same time that Truman issued his order, the military was moving from a wartime to a peacetime footing. As a result of our Nation's reduced force structure, Ira was one of the many thousands of soldiers who was discharged.

Although Ira had been discharged from the military, he was not deterred from serving his country. In 1949, Ira was able to reenlist in the U.S. Air Force. He proudly served his country until he retired in 1972.

After retiring, he started a security service that contracted with the Watergate apartments. He hired a young man by the name of Wills, who discovered the Watergate break-in. Ira was contacted, and his report started the Watergate episode.

Ira has been a resident of the District of Columbia for 56 years and has always been active in his community. In 2004, he received the Roots in Scouting Award recognizing a lifetime of work with the Boy Scouts of America.

I was honored to be with Ira at the Bolling Air Force Base Officers' Club on March 28 of this year when Kerwin Miller, Department of Veterans Affairs, presented him with a proclamation declaring Tuskegee Airmen Day in Washington D.C.

During the same ceremony, a room at the Officers' Club, the Tuskegee room, was also dedicated. A day later, I was again honored to share with Ira that proud moment at the rotunda of the Capitol when he and the other Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award that Congress bestows.

Mr. Speaker, for his dedicated military service, during and after World War II, and for his ongoing public service on behalf of the District of Columbia, I am proud to acknowledge and to salute First Lieutenant Ira O'Neal's service to his country, his community and family.

May God bless him and rest his soul.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SARBANES). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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