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House of Representatives

The House met at 2 p.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

As Members assemble for this fall session of the 109th Congress, Lord God, we ask for Your blessing upon all who serve as Members or staff in the House of Representatives. Invigorate them, Lord, with health and clarity of conscience, that in and through them Your holy will be accomplished.

As true representatives of the people, enable Members to undertake the task of addressing the Nation's greatest natural disaster in history and whatever else You ask of them with care, imagination and deep commitment.

May all the work accomplished in this Chamber be blessed by You and be perceived as a blessing by the people of this Nation and the world community. May all laws be just, inclusive and far-reaching both in vision and effectiveness.

May Your people hold this noble institution in high esteem and give You, Almighty God, glory and praise now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3199. An act to extend and modify authorities needed to combat terrorism, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 3199) ''An Act to extend and modify authorities needed to combat terrorism, and for other purposes,'' requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. SPECTER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. KYL, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. ROCKFELLER and Mr. LEVIN, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 172. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for the regulation of all contact lenses as medical devices, and for other purposes.

S. 397. An act to prohibit civil liability actions from being brought or continued against manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or importers of firearms or ammunition for damages, injunctive or other relief resulting from the misuse of their products by others.

S. 501. An act to provide a site for the National Women's History Museum in the District of Columbia.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Speaker signed the following enrolled bill on Friday, September 2, 2005:

H.R. 3645, making emergency supplemental appropriations to meet immediate needs arising from the consequences of Hurricane Katrina, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

THE LOUISIANA-TEXAS CONNECTION

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in 1836 Texans were in desperate need and fighting for freedom and independence from Mexico. Hundreds of men from Louisiana joined to help Texas in this struggle and time of need. Among them were Jim Bowie, hero of the Alamo; and volunteer soldiers forming a unit known as the New Orleans Greys helped in this endeavor. These brave men came to Texas' aid to fight against the oppression of the dictator Santa Anna. They fought and died at the Alamo, Goliad and San Jacinto.

Today, 170 years later, it is the people of Louisiana who are in desperate need in their struggle against the oppression caused by Hurricane Katrina. There are approximately 200,000 people from Louisiana now in Texas because of Katrina.

Mr. Speaker, just as the people of Louisiana came to Texas' aid those many years ago, so will Texans come to theirs. We along with other Americans will join the people of Louisiana until they are able to be free from the effects of Hurricane Katrina and rebuild their great city of New Orleans. It is what good Americans, good neighbors, good Southerners, and good Texans do.

HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, our Nation failed its people last week. There was a violation of the trust that the American people have a right to vest in their government. The importance of that trust cannot be overstated. It is why we let our sons

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and daughters go to foreign lands to fight wars. It is why we pay our taxes. It is why we obey official laws and orders.

But last week this trust was breached. Whether it is because we are not used to seeing poverty so visible or the results of institutional racism so stark or because of just pure incompetence, it was criminal to abandon thousands and thousands of men and women, mothers and children and grandparents to rot in the squalor of complete government neglect. There has to be an immediate, rigorous and harsh determination of accountability for this criminal neglect.

But there must also be a response worthy of a great and prosperous and noble Nation. A person of the caliber of a Colin Powell, perhaps, must be given singular authority and responsibility to resettle when necessary, to rebuild where possible, and to return eventually New Orleans to its status as one of America's great cities. The people of New Orleans are asking for no more and the American people should demand no less.

HOPE FROM HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, throughout the past week, Americans have watched scenes of devastation that we never imagined would occur in our country. Lives have been lost, families have been separated, and communities have been demolished in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As rescue workers search for survivors and permanent shelter for evacuees, the severity of this disaster continues to shock all Americans.

As a former National Guard liaison to the Governor's office during hurricanes in South Carolina, I see that our Nation grows more hopeful every day. Federal, State, and local officials are working together to save lives, deliver relief and restore order in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Last Friday, Congress passed a $10.5 billion emergency relief package to immediately help American families.

Across our country, Americans are opening up their homes and their checkbooks to help their neighbors. I would like to encourage South Carolinians to join this effort by contacting the Red Cross at www.redcross.org or by calling 1–800–HELP-NOW. Now more than ever, Americans must do what we do best: help each other.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to express, first and foremost, my sincere sympathy for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are dealing with a catastrophic event; and they deserve whatever it takes from the Federal Government. The mismanagement of the Federal response to this disaster is beyond comprehension. The victims and the rest of America deserve answers to their questions, not excuses, because there is no excuse for the slow Federal reaction. There is no excuse for the lack of preparedness. There is no excuse for this absence of leadership.

Why were Federal funding requests by Louisiana for flood control perennially denied? Why was the New Orleans district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget for levee construction slashed by a record $72 million? Why was the head of FEMA, Michael Brown, hired despite having zero background in disaster management and was actually fired from his previous job for mismanagement?

It is clear now that we need to revamp FEMA, and that starts with firing Michael Brown as director who has been an absolute embarrassment. Louisiana Governor Blanco has hired former FEMA director James Lee Witt to direct Katrina recovery efforts. I encourage President Bush to follow Governor Blanco's lead and to hire someone new, this time based on qualifications, not political patronage.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Government needs to get the best people possible working on the rescue, recovery, and rebuilding efforts. Anything less is unacceptable.

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ENCOURAGING CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my heartfelt condolences to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. My thoughts and prayers are with those who suffered through the storm and continue to suffer through its aftermath. I especially pray for those who have lost loved ones and hope they can find some comfort in this time of distress.

I commend the many volunteers, health care workers, law enforcement officials and military personnel who have been working selflessly around the clock to help those who have been devastated by this hurricane.

I hope that my constituents in North Carolina's Fifth Congressional District and other Americans will join me in making a contribution to a charitable organization. The outpouring of generosity and support from our communities has been amazing, but we must do more. The people affected by this storm need our help right away. A donation to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other charitable organizations will help provide the resources necessary for these people to survive.

Again, I extend my thoughts and prayers to the victims of this hurricane and their loved ones. May God bless you all.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RESTORATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT

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

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, we confront a hideous problem in this Nation. People are dying. People are dead. And people need help. The hospitals are full and nonfunctioning, and the suffering is tremendous all across the southern part of the United States.

The first task we have is to assure that we take care of the people, and we resolve the problems of seeing to it that their suffering is ended and that the rebuilding begins. But while we are doing that, we can commence looking at one thing, and that is the structure of the Federal Government to address problems of these kinds.

At the time we passed the Homeland Security legislation, it was very plain that inserting FEMA into the Department of Homeland Security was a prodigious mistake. Events in the southern United States associated with Hurricane Katrina have proved that to be so.

I am introducing at an early time legislation which sees to it that FEMA becomes an independent agency, with the head reporting directly to the President of the United States, whose responsibility will be set out in statute and whose qualifications and that of his two principal assistants, also subject to confirmation by the Senate, will have to meet certain tests, and that is the need to show ability and experience in areas of emergency management. Only by doing this can we assure that the kind of misfortune and the kind of open criticism that has occurred in the United States of FEMA and our efforts to help people in the southern United States will not occur on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, FEMA was an outstanding Federal agency directing its attentions to the cure of massive problems that followed catastrophes, things like hurricanes, fires and earthquakes. We need to see to it that that wonderful reputation is restored by proper structuring of the agency.

AMERICAN CAN-DO SPIRIT WILL WORK FOR HURRICANE KATRINA VICTIMS

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