

And we must use this as an opportunity to find out what went wrong, how our government whose responsibility is protecting its citizens, failed so miserably in the Gulf Region and how we can prevent this tragedy again. I call for an independent Commission, bi-partisan with the full authority of the 9/11 Commission to get to the bottom of this, and recommend to the Congress the changes that will be necessary to protect American lives in the future.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE
HURRICANE KATRINA SUPPLEMENTAL

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mrs. LOWEY. I rise today in support of this legislation, a down payment toward fulfilling our obligation to help the citizens and cities ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

The tragedy of Katrina has exposed some difficult truths of American life. That the richest Nation on earth is just as vulnerable to the laws of nature as the poorest. That the haves are not only poorer than the have-nots—they are also less safe.

The tragedy has also brought into sharp focus the debate about the role of government in citizens' lives. It has exposed the fallacy advanced by the leadership of this Congress and the administration that government is the problem, and it can't ever be the solution.

I believe that government should work with the private sector to help people help themselves to achieve their goals. Government should be a partner in making the lives of Americans better.

Unfortunately, too often, on the floor of this chamber, we've heard from Members who bemoan the size of the government and blast programs to help vulnerable populations, even as they tout legislation providing billions in Federal resources to the most powerful and connected companies and individuals in this country. They have been allowed to snip away at the web of structures put in place to help the American people.

Katrina was the deluge that exposed what we have warned of all along—when you starve the government, it fails those who need it most.

In times of crisis and in times of need, the people expect—and should expect—that their government will stand with them. American taxpayers deserve strong, competent leaders who jump into action, rather than ignore crisis and delay response. Who take responsibility, not rush to point fingers. Who understand that government is necessary and can be a force for good.

Last week, the U.S. Government failed its people. This legislation is merely one step toward repairing this breach of basic trust, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

STATEMENT ON THE SECOND
EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATIONS FOR HURRI-
CANE KATRINA RESPONSE

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, in this time of national tragedy, the merits of this bill are obvious. The American people are generous and insist that we offer aid and assistance to Hurricane Katrina's survivors.

The confidence of our nation was shaken by the slowness and shortcomings of the federal government's response to this massive human tragedy.

While this Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Hurricane Katrina Response provides an additional \$51.8 billion for hurricane relief, much more will need to be done.

Congress must ensure that the victims, and the state, local, federal and private agencies that are trying to care for them, have the resources they need.

However, it is not enough to just vote for large funding bills. Americans also want accountability on the over \$60 billion we have appropriated so far for Hurricane Katrina relief.

We have to make sure that the relief money we are appropriating today and in the future actually gets to the victims, and is not used on unscrupulous contractors or spent on projects that boost the profits of companies seeking to profit at the expense of the hurricane victims and the taxpayers. This was the case in Iraq, where hundreds of millions of dollars were either "lost" or improperly paid to contractors like Halliburton.

To make sure that the \$2 billion that FEMA is now spending every day is properly used, I believe that, even as we appropriate billions for hurricane relief, we also provide additional resources to the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security to help ensure that the additional tens of billions of dollars that will be necessary to care for our fellow Americans and rebuild the South are not wasted through fraud, abuse, overpayments or ineffective government management.

We have many good reasons for concern about wasteful spending. In the 3 years since the Department of Homeland Security, the umbrella department that houses FEMA, was created, numerous reports by the Congress, the Department's Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have detailed instance after instance of contracting deficiencies, fraud, wasteful or lavish spending, lax oversight and management, procurement shortcomings, blurred lines of responsibility and lack of accountability.

I believe that this Congress must make sure, to the greatest extent possible, that the funds that we are appropriating today and in the coming months to help the Hurricane Katrina victims are directed squarely at helping the victims and not those who seek to profit at the expense of the victims who desperately need the help. This is more than just a business opportunity for the Administration's friends. It is an opportunity to do the right thing and help those who are suffering, and it is our obligation.

I also want to express my disappointment in the bicameral review committee created by the

Republican Majority to examine the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina. This committee, simply put, will be toothless.

HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with persons across this great nation and this world to express my condolences for those who have suffered as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I also want to commend all those people who have worked hard to lift up their fellow man during this time of crisis.

This disaster is one unlike anything we've ever seen before. At one point 80 percent of the city of New Orleans was under water. Up to 1 million families have been displaced. There are estimates that 400,000 to 500,000 people could lose their jobs because of the hurricane. And despite the magnitude of these numbers, they still don't do justice to the human suffering we have seen on television and in person.

But out of every tragedy comes the opportunity for each and every person to show his or her humanity through acts of compassion. That is why I am so proud of my fellow Texans and my fellow Houstonians. From Governor Rick Perry, Mayor Bill White, and Judge Robert Eckels on down, everyone has come together to make sure that we do everything in our power to help the quarter of a million evacuees we have taken in. In the Houston area alone, we have taken in over 100,000 of our neighbors to the east, 15,000 of which were sheltered in the Astrodome, which is in my Congressional District.

Several organizations in the Houston area are leading the disaster relief effort. Some of the help is coming from volunteers with Operation Compassion, a massive relief effort led by Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston and spearheaded by the Second Baptist Church. The thousands of volunteers from 131 local congregations have assumed primary responsibility for feeding the masses of storm victims who have taken refuge there. I commend them and others for extending their good will towards others.

As we in Congress look towards our next steps, we must ensure that our top priority remains caring for those who have lost loved ones, lost their homes, and lost their means of providing for their families. They have, through no fault of their own, become the least, the last, and the lost of our society. It is our responsibility to help them back on their feet. To do so they will need food stamp assistance and access to Medicaid. They will need temporary emergency housing and the federal assistance to help them rebuild their homes and their lives.

We have taken important first steps by passing a \$10.5 billion disaster relief bill last Friday, followed by an additional \$51.8 billion for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security today. But these are only the first in a long series of actions that we will need to try to repair the physical damage caused by Hurricane Katrina as well as the lives of those affected by the hurricane. I ask that all of my distinguished colleagues and the