

In order to qualify for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding, a jurisdiction is required to submit a plan detailing their disaster preparedness plan. The PETS Act would simply require State and local emergency preparedness authorities to plan for how they would accommodate household pets and service animals when presenting these plans to FEMA. Animals do not go before people, but animals will have a place in this plan.

The human horror and devastation in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama was a tragedy we are addressing, but it was also heartbreaking to hear stories of forcing evacuees to choose between being rescued or remaining with their pets.

This bipartisan legislation is necessary because when asked to choose between abandoning their pets or their personal safety, many pet owners chose to risk their lives and would continue today to risk their lives and remain with their pets. The plight of the animals left behind was truly tragic. This is not just an animal protection issue; this is a public safety issue. Roughly two-thirds of American households own pets. We need to ensure the pets and their pet owners are protected.

I urge my colleagues to support passage of this legislation. I, too, want to make reference to that young man; I guess he was around 7 years old. I think of him and think this young man may have lost his home, he may have lost everything he owned, but he had his pet. As long as he had his pet, he could deal with it. To see this pet being grabbed from him, to me it was the height of cruelty that I still have a hard time understanding and appreciating.

When my mom and dad moved when I was 8 or 9 years old to another place, our pet dog, Mack, kept running back to the original house, and we lost him. For 2 years, I didn't have a pet, but I grew up with a pet. Then we moved to a new home and my parents could afford nothing else. They told me no Christmas presents. There would be no Christmas presents. My Christmas present was a new home, a brand new room, and I dealt with that. I thought, this year, no Christmas presents.

They were gone Christmas Eve day, and they came home that night. They didn't tell me where they had been, which was very unusual. I was with my three older brothers. Then my parents asked me to come down into the garage. As I did, they were walking up holding a beautiful collie pup. That night I slept on the floor with Lance, my collie pup.

I will never forget the joy I had. It was the best Christmas I ever had, and it was just one little gift, a pet that remained in our household for years.

This is an important bill, and I urge its passage.

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I want to thank Mr. LANTOS and his wife, Annette, in particular for extend-

ing their well-known humanitarian instincts to the welfare of animals. I also want to thank Mr. SHAYS and Mr. SHUSTER for all of their work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I also want to thank Mr. LANTOS and Mr. SHAYS for their work on this bill.

The PETS Act would help ensure that household pets and service animals are considered by State and local emergency preparedness plans because there are people in this country, myself included, I have a dog Chloe that has a close relationship with my family, and I know people throughout this country have pets that are near and dear to their hearts.

When you go to a rooftop, as we saw down in New Orleans as Mr. SHAYS and Mr. LANTOS pointed out, people are unwilling to get aboard a boat or helicopter if they have to leave their beloved pet behind. Once again, this is so States and local emergency preparedness plans take into consideration situations that might occur if someone has to abandon their pets. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3858, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2005. This bill amends the Stafford Act to ensure that state and local emergency preparedness plans account for the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals following a major disaster or emergency.

There were many tragedies from Hurricane Katrina that will not soon be forgotten. Some of the most indelible images were the ones of people being forced to choose between leaving their pets behind or being evacuated to safety. In many cases, these loyal animals had stayed with their owners for days on rooftops waiting to be rescued, only to be abandoned because the rescuers refused to carry the pets to safety with their owners. In other cases, people chose not to be rescued—putting themselves in further danger—because they simply could not bear to leave their pets behind.

A person should not have to leave their seeing-eye dog behind in order to save her own life—as we saw in Hurricane Katrina. Nor should a child, who has already been traumatized by the devastation of a disaster, have to abandon his beloved pet in order to be transported to safety—as we saw in Hurricane Katrina. As the June 1st start of the next hurricane season approaches, it's important that this bill becomes law and that state and local officials start to plan for the evacuation of pets and service animals.

There are, of course, other issues in the wake of Hurricane Katrina that this Congress should address. Last week, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Government Reform Committee favorably ordered reported H.R. 5316, the Restoring Emergency Services to Protect our Nation from Disasters (RESPOND) Act to the House. The RESPOND Act not only restores FEMA as an independent, cabinet-level agency, but it also reforms and strengthens our national emergency preparedness system so that we never again have to witness such a dismal failure by

the federal government to respond to its citizens in need as we did with Hurricane Katrina.

H.R. 5316 ensures that FEMA's core functions of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation will once again coexist and work to complement each other in an independent FEMA, and not be separated and dismantled as they have been in the Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. Speaker, the bill we have before us is a much-needed first step in a longer process of reforming our emergency management system. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3858.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3858, the Pets and Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2005. This is a sample, focused piece of legislation that will require local and state emergency preparedness authorities to include in their evacuation plans how they will accommodate household pets and/or service animals in case of a disaster. It deserves our support.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita revealed gaping holes in our capacity to effectively manage the aftermath of large-scale disasters. Our failures in emergency response and evacuation were numerous, and they varied in both size and importance. One problem with our response was a blind spot in our disaster planning regarding the evacuation of pets and service animals. For too many caring animal owners, the opportunity to escape danger means separation from a beloved pet. More grievous, the evacuation of many residents of the Gulf Region who are dependent on service animals was complicated by inflexible regulations that did not take their special needs into account.

H.R. 3858 is commonsense legislation that will ensure planning for future disaster provides for the needs of pet owners. This bill is support by the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Doris Day Animal League and the Best Friends Animal Society.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to join in support of H.R. 3858.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3858.

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. LANTOS. 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.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.