

Now, Mr. Speaker, I spent some time in Long Island, New York, recently and also in New Jersey. The devastation that Sandy has caused that region is nothing short of remarkable.

And while I do believe that we have a spending problem that has been going on, frankly, in this House, on both sides of the aisle for a long time, there are those times when we need to come together as an American people and say we have Americans out there that cannot provide for themselves, that have been devastated, that need a helping hand.

And do I think that they will repay that? I do.

We have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to come together as Americans, Republicans and Democrats together, to try to help provide need.

My colleague, JOE CROWLEY, was just up here talking about devastation that happened on the beaches. MICHAEL GRIMM, and I'm sure most of the New York and New Jersey delegations which will follow up here, and those from Connecticut, will talk about devastation that was happening in their communities.

I do believe that we have a role to play, and I do believe that action needs to happen and happen quickly.

Now, there are many on my side of the aisle that believe that we shouldn't be spending a nickel more than we have to. And while I agree that we need to tighten spending, and that this body needs to treat spending and those dollars as if they were their own, we can't needlessly ask taxpayers to provide more resources only to have them squandered.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, these dollars will not be squandered. I believe that they are desperately needed. At a time when many Americans have lost hope, there is that opportunity for us to stand united together to provide that hope for the American public. It may be New York and New Jersey and Connecticut and Pennsylvania today, but it may be a different part of the country tomorrow.

Now, as we look forward, Mr. Speaker, as the 112th Congress comes to a close, we have a heck of a lot more work to be done as a country.

□ 1030

I, for one, hope that we can talk about reining in the out-of-control spending. But then, again, it's not going to happen with one party or the other. It's going to have to be about bipartisanship. And I do hope that we can bring pieces of legislation on this floor, like Simpson-Bowles, in that framework, that talk about revenue increases, whether that be through reforming the Tax Code and talking about where we can rein in spending, how we can reform things to make sure we have a social safety net, which is so vital. And I do believe that we need to have that social safety net. We need to strengthen that social safety net so that it's there for future generations.

I also think, Mr. Speaker, as we look at health care, we have to start thinking outside of the box. And certainly, I have enjoyed working with ROB ANDREWS on the American Center for the Cures, an idea that we need to be looking at how do we solve and cure some of these diseases that we spend hundreds of billions of dollars on treating each and every year, whether it be diabetes, Alzheimer's, or Parkinson's. If we came up with a cure for these types of diseases, think about where we'd be then, and where we can put those additional resources into the very vital areas that our government needs to fund.

So I am optimistic, Mr. Speaker, that our best days are ahead. But I also know that people are fed up with the idea of this partisanship. And I fear that we're going further partisan; that we're anchoring to the extremes as opposed to coming to the center. My hope is that this body can focus more on what we agree on as opposed to what we disagree on. That's what the American public's looking for. That's what I hope this Congress can accomplish in the 113th, and beyond.

I want to take this last moment to thank so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their friendship, for their support, and I certainly look forward to continuing the friendship in future years.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) for 2½ minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, the Republican do-nothing leadership has an opportunity to do something—something very important—today to help the more than 17 million Americans who were devastated by Hurricane Sandy, one of the worst storms in U.S. history, more than 9 weeks ago. The Senate has sent us a good bill. We are ready to act. We have the bipartisan votes to pass it. And yet the House Republican leadership has said there will be no votes today, the last day to pass this legislation without delay before we have to start all over again in the new session of Congress tomorrow.

Let me be very clear. Republican leadership has turned their backs on New Yorkers. They have turned their backs on those suffering without homes and businesses struggling just to get by. They have no valid reason for this delay—only the dysfunction with which they lead this body.

This record storm resulted in the deaths of over 100 Americans. The coasts of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut have been devastated. Other surrounding States have sustained significant damage. In 2005, this body came together and passed a Federal disaster assistance bill to help the gulf recover from Hurricane Katrina 2 weeks after the storm. Congress acted to assist those who suffered damage in

Hurricane Gustav and Ike within 1 month.

The Governors of our States, Democrat and Republican, have assessed over \$82 billion in damages. The Senate bill would have provided \$60.4 billion—not everything that was requested, but a detailed, thoughtful disaster assistance plan to help these communities rebuild. More than 9 weeks since the storm hit, House Republican leadership is doing nothing, after giving us nearly virtual assurance just yesterday that we would consider this assistance bill today.

When a disaster hits on American soil, we as a Congress have the responsibility and tradition of working together, Democrat and Republican, to help communities rebuild. Our citizens are counting on us to help them recover from the storm and mitigate future disasters. I respectfully urge House leadership to reconsider their decision. Support the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Put politics aside. Do the right thing. People are waiting. People need this assistance. Let's bring the bill to a vote today.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DOLD). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KING of New York. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset, let me thank you for your service during your time in Congress, and thank you for your remarks here this morning.

I think it's important to set the record straight. Last night, many of us came to the floor and rightly said that the conduct of the Republican leadership was disgraceful, it was indefensible, and it was immoral. But I think it's important to lay out the facts as to how we reached this situation so we're not put in a position of name-calling or somehow we're angry or feelings are hurt. This goes far beyond any of that.

The fact is, as Congresswoman LOWEY said, within 10 days after Katrina, \$60 billion was appropriated. That number ended up going well over \$100 billion. It's now 9 weeks and nothing has been appropriated by this Congress for the people of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Long Island, which I represent.

The fact is that over the last 5, 6, 7 weeks we did everything that the Republican leadership asked us to do. Governor Cuomo came down. I was at the meeting. He met with the Speaker. Governor Christie came down. He met with the Speaker. Governor Bloomberg came down. He met with the majority leader. We were asked to submit detailed documentation. Governor Christie, Governor Cuomo, and Mayor Bloomberg all submitted absolute documentation. When we asked if anything else is required, they said, No, you've given us all we need.

When the bill came from the Senate, we were told there was some pork in

the bill. That was taken out of the bill. The bill that was going to be voted on on the House floor was exactly in compliance with what the Republican leadership asked us to do.

Let me just say at this time, in my dealings with him, Majority Leader CANTOR has been very straightforward, very direct. Last night, I know that he was fighting to get the bill on the calendar. It was the Speaker that, for whatever reason, walked off the floor and said that the bill was being pulled.

Now I don't enjoy saying this. I consider myself a personal friend of JOHN BOEHNER. And JOHN BOEHNER personally has been very helpful to me over the years. So it pains me to say this. But the fact is the dismissive attitude that was shown last night toward New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, typifies, I believe, a strain in the Republican Party. I know this is not the place to discuss politics, but that politics seeps over into a governmental decision that was made.

I can't imagine that type of indifference, that type of disregard, that cavalier attitude being shown to any other part of the country when we're talking about real life-and-death situations here—and to just have the Speaker walk off and not even tell us. He tells an aide to the majority leader, who then tells us that the item that means life and death was taken off the calendar and is gone for this session.

Now they say it's going to be brought back up in January. The fact is: let's be real. We're not in session next week. The following week we're in session for 2 days. The following week is the inauguration, and we're in recess for 2 days. Then we have the State of the Union. Committees haven't even organized yet. And does anyone believe if they wouldn't vote for a \$60.4 billion last night, that the Appropriations Committee is suddenly going to get religion and going to vote the full amount, when we know what their attitude is—that somehow money going to New York and New Jersey and Connecticut is corrupt money, when money going to their States is so honorable. I would just say that these people have no problem finding New York when it comes to raising money. It's only when it comes to allocating money that they can't find the ability to do it.

So I'm standing here on the House floor today saying we have a moral obligation as Republicans, as Democrats, as Americans. I spoke to Governor Christie and Governor Cuomo. We've been in constant contact with Mayor Bloomberg. We cannot believe that this cruel knife in the back was delivered to our region. I have to go home this weekend and next weekend and the week after and see the hundreds and thousands of people who are out of their homes, who don't have shelter, who don't have food, and they're living with relatives, friends, and living in trailers. This is not the United States of America. This should not be the Republican Party. This should not be the Republican leadership.

I'm asking the Speaker, tell HAL ROGERS and these people who somehow who have become very sanctimonious when dealing with New York and New Jersey that they have an obligation to do what they have to do—and that's provide the aid and relief that we need. If there's one penny that they have a problem with, let us know. But don't walk out in the dark of night and ignore us.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for 2½ minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Let me thank Mr. KING, my colleague from New York, for his remarks. I really appreciate what he said—that this is not a Republican or Democratic issue. It shouldn't be politicized. Natural disasters and responding to them are what I've seen over my 25 years in Congress, and they are what bring us together to try to help people. The Speaker should not use this opportunity to tear us apart.

I was here last night when we got the word through Congressman KING that the Speaker was going to pull this bill. And what the message said was, Well, we can do this in January. We'll do it sometime later in January in the new Congress.

□ 1040

As Congressman KING said, we can't wait. My district was devastated by this storm. I would ask of Speaker BOEHNER, come to Sea Bright, New Jersey. Drive through Sea Bright, New Jersey. It's a town that has less than 2,000 people. The business district is totally destroyed. One or two stores have reopened; the rest are still closed. Most of the people still have not been able to return to the town.

Go to Union Beach in New Jersey, also in my district, where you can see that now everything is exposed. We still have people that do not have a place to stay, that are looking for an apartment or staying in motels or looking for a trailer to be placed next to their home and still don't have it.

We need to rebuild now. We need to act now. We can't wait for the next Congress or another couple of weeks or another couple of months.

What I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, is how is it possible that this has become a political issue? It is clear that we're here today. We can vote on this. The votes are clearly there. We should have an open debate. That's what democracy is all about. And all of a sudden, because the Tea Party or some conservative element is worried that they have to vote on another spending bill, all of a sudden the Speaker says, well, we can't do this today. This is politicizing a situation that should not be political. It is another example of what I call the "do-nothing" Congress.

This Congress did very little. It had fewer bills passed than in anybody's

memory. Rather than go out on this negative note about not bringing up an emergency because of a hurricane, a devastating natural disaster, why not do something positive on a bipartisan basis, Mr. Speaker. Bring this up. Let us have an open debate. We're still here. Don't let this Congress die on this negative note. Let it build on a positive note, so when we come in and we're sworn in on Thursday, we can show that we can work on a bipartisan basis.

I have never seen anything like it. To me, it is just deplorable.

FAREWELL REMARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RIVERA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RIVERA. Mr. Speaker, as we close on the 112th Congress, I wish to express my gratitude to the residents of Florida's 25th Congressional District for having given me the honor and the privilege to serve them as their elected Representative in the United States Congress.

When my constituents first elected me to come to Congress, they did so with what I thought was a very clear mandate as to what the focus of the 112th Congress should be, and that is to restore fiscal responsibility to the Federal Government and begin moving our economy forward to create jobs. Here in the U.S. House of Representatives, I believe we have strived to meet the challenges that out-of-control spending have created in the form of yearly deficits and long-term debt accumulation. The 112th Congress' passage of the free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama and South Korea demonstrates what type of pro-economic growth and job-creation policies can be achieved when we place the Nation's long-term economic interests before parochial or short-term considerations.

Unfortunately, too often in the 112th Congress, our efforts here in the U.S. House of Representatives to restore fiscal responsibility to the Federal Government have not been met with the same sense of urgency by our governing partners in the United States Senate or the White House. Last evening's vote regarding a so-called fiscal cliff is yet another example of Washington's willingness to forego making difficult, long-term decisions regarding spending in deference to short-term fixes that do not solve our looming debt crisis. That same debt crisis, that is the real fiscal cliff that our Nation faces; because whether we realize it or not, the more our Nation climbs this mountain of debt—a mountain we ourselves are creating—the higher the cliffs will be.

I urge future Congresses to meet this challenge, take up the challenge in restoring fiscal responsibility with a renewed sense of vigor and urgency.

I also want to encourage my colleagues in the 113th Congress to apply that same sense of urgency to another