

during the last year. In each of those occasions, FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program administrators have been there, paid the claims that they are obligated to pay. The residents of the gulf coast area and region deserve no less.

FEMA is quickly running out of money. The flood insurance program must be able to handle the claims resulting from the catastrophic losses. Historically, whenever the National Flood Insurance Program has borrowed from the Treasury, it has been paid back in full. We need to act to enable this stop-gap measure to cover claims from the gulf coast. We should not think of this as a new obligation. Instead, it is a necessary step to keep a legal promise that Congress has made to homeowners and business owners when Congress passed the National Flood Insurance Act.

We have a moral obligation to honor our commitments, Mr. Speaker, and to provide the coverage we promised to provide, to help victims. They need help to rebuild their homes and their lives. I ask my colleagues for their support and seek adoption of the Senate language in this bill.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I rise troubled, I must say, by this legislation. I appreciate the chairman's commitment to reform and also the ranking member. They have been steering, I think, a good course with Financial Services, and I am encouraged by their words that we are going to go ahead and attempt to continue the process of reforming the flood insurance program.

But today in signing off on \$22 billion that cannot be supported simply by the premiums by the individuals that are covered right now, I personally think is a tremendous lost opportunity.

We heard a lot of rhetoric the last couple of days. People come to the floor talking about how to save taxpayer dollars, but we have not undertaken to make reforms that would protect taxpayers in the first place.

Our colleague from Mississippi has been focusing on the problem with flood insurance not being available to a whole range of people. No expectation they should have it. People behind levees are not required to have flood insurance. We have not dealt with subsidized insurance for areas that are vacation homes, second homes.

I am concerned that there is never really a good time to be able for us to seize this opportunity. While I say I am heartened by what I have heard from the ranking member and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), and certainly they steered a difficult course last time in being able to make some of these incremental achievements, but if there was ever a time that the attention of this Congress should be on the dangers of the way that the program

works now and the people that are in harm's way, the opportunity to not just save money but save lives by these reforms.

Nonetheless, I look forward to working with the ranking member and the Chair, and I will do anything in my power, but I would hope the House does not ever again allow something like this to come forward and miss such an opportunity.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman I agree with him this is a lost opportunity, but like the book "I Lost It At The Movies," we lost it at the Senate. So we are doing the best we can.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who has worked harder in the aftermath of this than I have ever seen any Member work in trying to deal with the desperate situation imposed on the people he represents.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, as I speak, one of the greatest legal scams in American history is being perpetrated on the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, honest Americans who purchased insurance policies to protect their families in time of a hurricane. They paid their premiums for decades. They are being told one by one "we are not going to pay your claim."

See, in a typical insurance policy known as a "wind policy," you would think it would protect you from the 140- to 160-knot breezes of Hurricane Katrina; but somehow buried in that policy is small language that says they are not going to pay for wind-driven water.

Now, for most of us, you would think of wind-driven water as maybe the water driven under the stoop of your door in a rain storm, or if you have an older house like I had, under the windows, maybe get some curtains wet or the sheet rock under that window.

So if the wind blew a tree into your house, you could file a claim. If the wind blew a car into your house, you could file a claim. But if the wind generates a 30-foot wall of water, well, then the American insurance industry en masse is telling those people in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and the Alabama gulf coast, You're out of luck. We took your money. You're a chump.

Our Nation has a flood insurance policy separate from that where the credibility of this Nation is at stake. I have already told you what I have thought the private sector is doing to my people. But this is us. We also collected people's money in good faith that when there was a flood of their homes that would be paid. We had an unprecedented natural disaster.

Now, two things can happen. We can go the way of the private sector which is doing everything they can to scam my constituents, and please use that word, or we can honor our claims. Because a person or a nation is only as good as its word. Our Nation gave our word that we would pay these claims if

substantiated. Those claims have been substantiated. Let us set a precedent that hopefully the insurance industry will follow and pay our claims.

□ 1830

I want to commend Chairman OXLEY. I want to commend Ranking Member FRANK for bringing this to the floor in a timely manner. I very much want to commend the other body for plussing this up so that we can fulfill our obligation as a Nation for those people who had flood insurance policies, that we will pay those claims in a timely manner.

At the same time I want to go on record as saying that I think there ought to be a national registry of child molesters and, at the moment, insurance industry executives because I think Americans ought to know if they live near one.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, for my remaining 30 seconds, I want to send a message to FEMA.

The gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) has called to our attention a delay on the part of FEMA in telling people what elevations are required for new construction or replacement construction in the flooded areas. Until they have those elevations, they cannot proceed with the construction, and the gentleman told me we have been told there is a delay of perhaps up to 2 years. That is clearly unacceptable. So had we been able to bring a substitute bill to the floor, we were going to address that issue.

I hope FEMA will listen. I think I speak for both sides. I know the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) agreed with this when we raised it in committee that FEMA will promptly do the elevations necessary so that construction can proceed.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1957

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TERRY) at 7 o'clock and 57 minutes p.m.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. 571, EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE THAT DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES IN IRAQ BE TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY

Mr. GINGREY, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report