

sleeping American public. She deserves a great deal of credit for her tireless campaign against the Bush administration's lies and abuses which have governed the war in Iraq from the very beginning. Her campaign awakened the American people to realize just how awful this war truly is.

This weekend over 300,000 Americans, and I know it was more than 100,000 as reported by the press because I was there, over 300,000 Americans demonstrated the same resolve as Cindy Sheehan by showing up in force at a rally in Washington, D.C. It was one of the first times since the 1970s that so many people had descended on the Nation's capital to protest a war.

If strength of numbers demonstrates the injustice of a particular policy, then the thousands who participated in Saturday's march depicted the wrongness of the Iraq war.

Most Americans know that the war in Iraq is not increasing our national security, that by continuing to fight an unwinnable war the President is ensuring our national insecurity.

Most Americans know that the Bush administration had no plan for how to conduct the war. They had no plan for securing the country once Saddam was deposed; and now they have no plan for ending the war.

Most Americans know the terror and chaos that plague Iraq cannot be resolved simply by staying the course. I am sure the families of the 2,000 American soldiers and countless thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians killed in this war would argue that the last 2-plus years of fighting have not brought much stability to Iraq or to their lives.

Let us not forget about the thousands of American soldiers who were not killed in Iraq, but whose lives will nonetheless be changed forever as a result of injuries sustained during the war: arms and legs lost, shrapnel wounds cutting into every body part, emotional trauma. How will these wounds ever heal?

The thousands of Americans who bravely serve in our Nation's military deserve better. In fact, all Americans deserve better. They deserve better than an endless war that is slowly draining our national coffers. They deserve better than \$9 billion of congressionally appropriated funds being lost; \$9 billion lost. That is really pretty hard to imagine. Lost under the Coalition Provisional Authority's watch, or the new \$1 billion that has gone missing to the Iraqi Government, U.S. money intended for training of Iraqi security forces.

While the Bush administration is failing the American people through its foreign policies, they are also neglecting priorities at home. Just take the recent hurricanes that have bombarded the southeastern United States over the past month.

If anything, Katrina and Rita have demonstrated just how skewed our national priorities have become. The Federal Government failed to assist thou-

sands of Americans, mostly poor, mostly underprivileged, mostly African American during their great time of need.

What we need now is an independent commission to investigate how the hurricane response was botched so badly. Unfortunately, the Bush administration's response to the failures at home is just like his response given to its failures in Iraq: deflection and misdirection of any blame whatsoever.

President Bush has announced that he will establish a partisan, congressionally appointed oversight committee; but that is not what the American people need. That is not what the American people deserve. We need an impartial, independent commission to get to the bottom of why the National Guard was in Iraq and not in the United States to protect its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we need a drastic change in policies, both at home and in Iraq. The American people know when they are being lied to, when they are being misled.

It is time that Congress started doing what it was created to do: represent the will of the American people, rescue victims of natural disasters, and rescue our troops by bringing them home.

REPUBLICAN COMMITMENT TO THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, this evening, many of my colleagues, with the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), who will be our leader, will be rising tonight on the floor to speak in strong support of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

Violence against women is a horrific epidemic that continues to plague our world; and as a wife, as a mother, and a female Member of Congress, I realize the profound responsibility that all of us have to work together with our colleagues to pass legislation that would speak to the very heart of each and every woman.

As a result, thanks to the leadership of the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), we have consistently supported legislation that protects women from the grave attacks on human rights that they face.

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It is vital to understand that to promote the welfare of women is also to support the subsistence of mankind.

Domestic violence is not just a woman's issue. It is a national issue that demands our utmost attention and it demands to be a priority. Legislation passed in 1994 and reauthorized in the year 2000 will expire on September 30 of this year, crippling the fight to protect women from domestic abuse. The programs funded by the Violence Against

Women Act have had a profound impact on many women who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Sexual violence in our colleges and universities has reached epidemic proportions. It is appalling to imagine that when our precious children go to school to learn they are at risk for violence. This bill would provide additional funding for the training of campus law enforcement and campus judicial boards so that universities can focus on the critical task of educating our students.

Violence against women creates significant barriers to equity for women. The Violence Against Women Act would authorize critical programs and develop new services that respond to the needs of our communities. This bill recognizes the importance of cooperation between local law enforcement agencies and the courts and court-related personnel.

Violence against women cuts across racial and ethnic lines. In fact, minority women often face additional hardships which could in turn delay the healing process. Therefore, effective community developed programs that incorporate culturally specific services can break down some of these barriers that often isolate survivors. This bill provides support to local law enforcement, prosecutors, and to victim assistance programs to both stop violence against women and help the survivors so that they can start a new life.

We have to continue to work together to ensure that a culture of equality is cultivated, where the woman's role is increasingly recognized within society. Women make an indispensable contribution to the growth of our culture and their extraordinary presence permeates every aspect of our society. Without the contribution of women, society is less alive, culturally impoverished, and peace is made less stable.

As Vice Chair of the bipartisan Congressional Women's Caucus, I have consistently fought to protect women from domestic and sexual abuse, and I am so glad that we are joined not only by my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), but the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), who has been a leader in our women's caucus on this issue.

So we are talking about American women here, not Republican women, not Democrat women, but American women. The Violence Against Women Act is too important an issue for it to be left to partisan politics.

FEDERAL RESPONSE TO ENERGY EMERGENCIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and Rita,

Americans are pulling together, donating to relief organizations and giving their time to help the people of the Gulf coast region. That is how the American people react when they see their fellow citizens in need. Unfortunately, some people have looked at Katrina not as a chance to give, but as an opportunity for excessive profits. Some have decided to take this terrible tragedy and line their own pockets by price gouging the American people at the gas pump.

At a time when many Americans are choosing between filling their gas tanks or filling their prescriptions, oil companies are reaping record profits. People are rightly angry and frustrated with high gas prices, and they deserve to have someone on their side fighting to ensure that they do not get mugged at the gas pump. Sadly, this administration's answer has been to sit on its hands while consumers get the shake-down from the oil companies.

Eight governors, including Governor Granholm of Michigan, sent a letter to the President and Senate and House leadership urging Congress to act immediately by putting forth legislation that would return excessive, unconscionable collected profits to the consumers. As the governor stated, and I quote, "To price gouge consumers under normal circumstances is dishonest enough, but to make money off the severe misfortune of others is downright immoral."

It is obvious to me that Congress needs to protect the American people from price gouging and market manipulations. The Democratic bill, free from price gouging, is the Federal Response to Energy Emergencies bill. The FREE bill, as we call it, as authored by myself, the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH), and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is our answer to our Nation's record high gas prices and oil prices.

If you look at this chart right here, from 2002 when gas was \$1.34 a gallon, all the way up to September 12, 2005, where it is up to \$2.96, that more than double. Just take it from 2004, when gas was \$1.58. It has doubled in less than a year.

Currently, only 28 States have laws on the books that define price gouging and that have enforcement mechanisms to go after those found ripping off consumers. At the Federal level, there is no oversight to protect consumers from this predatory pricing. That is why we need our legislation now, the "free from price gouging" legislation. No American should have to pay too much for gas because oil companies are rigging prices.

Our bill would give the President authority to take immediate action in the face of an energy crisis by declaring a national energy emergency. Under our bill, for the first time ever, the Federal Government would have a guideline, a definition of price gouging. Our bill would also provide the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission and the

Department of Justice with the authority to investigate and prosecute those that engage in predatory pricing, from oil companies all the way down to the local gas stations, with an emphasis on those who profit the most. This includes the gouging of gasoline, home heating oil, propane, and natural gas.

Our legislation expands the FTC's authority to more aggressively pursue instances of market manipulation, such as geographic price setting and territorial restrictions imposed by refineries.

If we look at the second chart, Mr. Speaker, which appeared this weekend in *The Washington Post*, just look at what has happened in 1 year. As of September 5, 2005 of this year, from last September, we see a 46 percent increase from the crude oil producer; a 255 percent increase at the refinery level; a 5 percent increase for distributors and retailers, and taxes remain at 2 cents difference, with a 64-cent increase to the consumer. This is price manipulation. This is the market setting not the price, but the opportunity to manipulate and, as they call it, to game the system.

So with our legislation, we want not only to stop price gouging, but also we want transparency. How does the consumer know when he is being charged a fair price for oil and gas when you see statistics like this? How is the price set? That is what the American people want to know. They want to make sure they are not being gouged or unduly taken advantage of by the oil companies, or the refineries in this case.

Our bill empowers the Federal Government to impose tough civil penalties up to triple the damages of all excessive profits of oil companies that have cheated consumers. It also imposes tough criminal penalties of up to \$100 million on corporations, and fines of up to \$1 million plus jail sentences of up to 10 years for individuals caught in manipulating the price of gas, home heating oil, or natural gas.

This bill would provide relief to those paying skyrocketing energy and transportation costs and it would expand the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program through fines for those caught price gouging.

Our bill would protect consumers from unfair gas prices and punish those who think the time of a tragedy is the right time to rob Americans of their hard-earned money. It is the right thing to do for consumers and for our Nation. I urge support of the free from price gouging bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT REAUTHORIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is often said by politicians of both parties that Members of Congress must act with compassion and legislate from the heart. It is my strong and fervent belief that there are few pieces of legislation that this body will consider that are more relevant to the hearts and souls of our constituents than the passage of the Violence Against Women Act.

I have looked into the eyes of women beaten by men. Those women thought that that person was their partner for life, their soulmate and their lover. I have seen the pain and rejection and the hurt on their faces as these women struggle to recover their dignity and their strength.

I have spent a great deal of my public life being involved in raising money for domestic violence shelters. In the small county where I lived and was first a county commissioner, I raised money, because I saw the need. I was involved in the board of the domestic violence shelter. For years, the Founding Fathers of the county, the power brokers, were in denial that domestic violence actually occurred in the county. When I finally got elected to the Florida State Senate, I fought long and hard to get funding for domestic violence shelters so that women and their children would have a place to go.

The purpose of this hour this evening is to highlight the Violence Against Women Act, which was first passed in 1994 and which will be on the House floor tomorrow. Before I go into any more detail, however, I would like to yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), a woman with whom I have worked closely over the 3 short years I have been here on issues affecting women and the former Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) for yielding to me, and for her steadfast support of women's issues, and particularly the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. She has been a leader in this area and, as she said, she legislates from the heart on this issue. I appreciate her and all of the bipartisanship that has been shown in the reauthorization of this bill.

In the 5 years since the Violence Against Women Act of 2000 was enacted, we have made remarkable gains towards stopping domestic and sexual violence. But the Violence Against Women Act is due to expire at the close of September and it is time for Congress to renew its commitment.