

Thirty-nine years ago my father put my sister and me and the family dog in the back seat of our car. My parents were in the front seat. Everything we owned was packed in a U-Haul that was connected to the back bumper of our car. We drove across country in the middle of the summer in an un-air conditioned car from upstate New York to California for my dad to get a job.

Before we got to California, we decided we would stop in Las Vegas for the night. We never left. The reason we never left is the day after we arrived in Las Vegas my dad joined the culinary union and the following day he got a job. He got a job as a waiter, which he kept for the next 33 years until he retired.

On a waiter's salary, on a union waiter's salary, my father made enough money to put a roof over our head, food on the table, clothes on our backs, and two daughters through college and law school; and the reason that he was able to do that is because of the fine wages that the unions had negotiated and fought for.

Because of the efforts of organized labor, so many doors of opportunity were opened to my family. No one has to convince me of the importance of unions in our country and the positive impact that they have on workers and business. I have had firsthand experience, and many of my fellow Nevadans have had the same experience.

Unions have had a significant impact on the city that my parents and my children and I call home. This is evident in the fact that Nevada has the highest percentage of workers that are union members in the country and our Nation's strongest economy. The culinary union Local 226 alone has more than 50,000 members and is the backbone of our community's service-oriented economy.

Las Vegas is the fastest growing metropolitan area in the country. Because of this incredible growth, the construction industry has exploded, and the building trades union members are helping to build our community. It is an oasis in the middle of the desert, thanks to them. Employers in southern Nevada recognize the importance of fostering partnerships with the unions. When workers make good wages, have good benefits and have good working conditions, productivity increases.

Southern Nevada's economy is booming and hardworking union men and women helped create this prosperity. I am proud of this strong organized labor movement in Nevada and the improvements that the unions have made for all workers.

Unions are the voice of working men and women in this country. Over the years, unions have worked to ensure that employees make liveable wages, work a 5-day workweek so they can spend time with their families, and receive overtime pay. Unions have fought and continue to fight to make sure that workers receive quality health care for themselves and their families.

Unions fight for families. Family-leave provisions allow parents to attend parent-teacher conferences, attend to sick family members or spend time with a newborn without the threat of losing their job. Through collective bargaining, unions have secured all of these benefits.

I am committed to protecting the right of our workers to both join unions and to collectively bargain, and I will fight against any attempt to erode these rights.

This country is far better off and a far better place to live and raise our families because of our unions and our right to organize. I commend the efforts of this Nation's hardworking men and women, and I pay tribute to them and organized labor today.

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

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE CITY OF HOUSTON IN RECOVERY AFTER TROPICAL STORM ALLISON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, on June 5, 2001, the storm of a lifetime, Tropical Storm Allison, hit the city of Houston and the surrounding areas. I rise today to pay tribute and to acknowledge the terrible loss that our community has suffered, the loss of some 21 individuals in our community; and whether or not the count is complete, we offer and I offer my deepest sympathy to all of those who have lost loved ones.

We know now that close to 17,000 residents of the city of Houston and surrounding areas have been impacted and have to be in shelters. But what we do know is that Houston has a can-do attitude, and we have drawn together as a community.

I am delighted that my colleagues from Texas will join me in a resolution congratulating all of those individuals who sacrificed and suffered, the ones who sacrificed to help with the rescue, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Houston Fire Department, the Houston Police Department, the various Red Cross workers and volunteers, and so many others who were just passing by and became a Good Samaritan.

It was a storm of a lifetime, because those who have lived in Houston all of their life have never seen such a storm, starting first on June 5, 2001, subsiding for a while, and then starting up with all of its fury in a couple of days. The downtown was under water, the Medical Center was under water, residential areas were under water, and people

everywhere were impacted. Freeways were shut down.

But that did not stop the mighty might of those who live in the greater Houston area. Mayor Lee P. Brown did an outstanding job of gathering the troops around and encouraging us to be able to accept our fate, but yet begin to recover.

Just this past Tuesday there was a Day of Prayer. As this hit, I was in the city and was able to engage with both the Mayor and the county judge as we surveyed the area. We are grateful for the Mayor's leadership in his letter to the Governor and the Governor's leadership, Governor Perry, in immediately contacting the White House, as we worked together in making contact with the White House and the President exercising his authority and declaring this a disaster area and in an expeditious time. We thank him.

At the same time, we thank those who withstood the storm. As I traveled throughout the district on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, as I traveled with the U.S. Coast Guard by helicopter and as well with the FEMA director, Joe Allbaugh, we all had one intent in mind, to immediately rescue and help those who were so devastated. There was a great deal of bravery, a great deal of heroism. The community did come together.

The recovery will be long. There are enormous challenges to overcome, and that is with the energy concern, the electricity concern, the telephone concern, the housing concern, the health concern, the school concern. Yes, the city has been impacted in so many ways, upwards of \$1 billion in damage. But what I can be gratified for is that there have been many efforts, corporate donations, FEMA on the ground, and the persistence of those of us who believe in helping, that we will press the point that these individuals will be able to overcome bureaucratic red tape and be declared recipients of funds that they truly need.

Let me thank my colleagues for their very kind remarks, and let me also acknowledge the various agencies like the IRS and other agencies that have noted the predicament of our community. I look forward to working with FEMA, ensuring that the reimbursement comes about.

I want to thank the Red Cross centers, the volunteer centers, Lakewood Church, Fondren Seventh Day Adventist Church, Kirby Middle School, all started by volunteers. The Sweet Home Baptist Church, the Sunnyside Multi-service, many of them initially manned by volunteers, and the Red Cross that came in subsequently. Although I know that they are not listening because they are focused on so many other important issues, let me thank them again.

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To the arts community of Houston, they are a viable part of your community. We will work with them. To the