

the "Dead Sea". However, leading edge technologies breathed new life into the Gulf—technologies that have enabled more efficient exploration in deeper waters and production from the deepest recesses of the earth's crust. Now the Gulf is widely recognized to be among the most promising areas in the world and oil production levels have increased sharply every year since 1996.

Leading edge offshore technology helps the country to find and produce the energy to heat our homes, fuel our cars, run our computers and drive the economy in faster, safer, cleaner and more efficient ways than ever thought possible. These innovations began with the natural gas and oil industry but they enrich the lives of all Americans. As the leading technological laboratory in the oil industry, the Gulf's transformation provides an interesting snapshot of the advances that have reverberated around the world and helped to keep energy abundant, affordable and clean.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING PPL ELECTRIC UTILITIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL 1600

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

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in praise of the actions of PPL Electric Utilities and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1600 for the inspiring sacrifices they made in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on behalf of citizens of the Gulf Coast.

Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita were two of the most destructive natural disasters to ever strike the United States. In the wake of these catastrophic storms, utilities serving the Gulf States reached out across the country for technical resources and skilled labor necessary to rebuild an electric infrastructure destroyed by the forces of nature.

PPL Electric Utilities is a great corporate citizen in my district that provides electricity needs for 1.3 million customers in eastern Pennsylvania. When the people of the Gulf Coast needed assistance, PPL true to form answered the call for help after both hurricanes. More than 180 of the company's employees willingly agreed to leave their homes and their families to help restore an essential basic service, to assist victims of the hurricanes in getting their lives back to normal.

Many of these employees were members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1600, skilled, dedicated union members whose efforts were desperately needed in the fight to restore a functioning

electrical grid in the devastated areas. These workers endured long hours of work, oppressive heat, uprooted trees, biting insects, and many other hazards to their personal safety.

In accomplishing their important task they earned respect and admiration of the people from Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as from those back home in Pennsylvania. Through their hard work, caring and professionalism they became true good will ambassadors of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the 15th Congressional District. It is my intention today to make sure this distinguished body is fully cognizant of the dynamic deference of both PPL Electric Utilities and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1600 and of their exceptional work in the Nation's time of need following Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. By working hand-in-hand, these two organizations toiled long hours to ease the suffering of the many affected by these natural disasters.

□ 1900

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to be here before the House, and I would like to thank the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and our elected leadership team, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), and also the gentleman from the great State of New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

We come to the floor, as you know, Mr. Speaker, almost every day to talk about issues that are facing Americans; some that we are working collectively on, others we are not working collectively on but should be working collectively on. Tonight, we are going to talk about some of the issues that we did not talk about last night, but I can tell you that the themes continue to run together.

I am here tonight with the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), Youngstown, Ohio, and as the gentlewoman from Florida was not here, I can tell her that what we are hearing and what we were talking about last night was the fact that now we are looking at how are we going to move forward in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, how are we going to respond to those Americans that have paid taxes all of their lives, and how are we going to correct past wrongs.

From the beginning, the majority side has come off the block saying, well, the story is kind of changing now,

which is interesting, but I have a copy of yesterday's Washington Post where there is a lot of bold talk about, well, first we are going to start with Medicaid, which is a program that provides health care for financially challenged Americans throughout this country, and we are going to find this \$500 million to offset some of the Katrina cost there; and then we are going to go to some folks who really cannot fend for themselves, we are going to pick on someone that is not our size and we are going to go and cut free and reduced lunches for financially challenged children, and then we are going to hit these small farming programs that we have out here so we can make sure they cannot compete with foreign agricultural interests, which are already cleaning our clock in many ways with the help of this majority that we have here now.

Now, this has kind of changed, but it has the same theme. Now we are going to go after young people, 30-somethings that are trying to educate themselves to compete against those kids coming from other countries here to the United States and that are taking their jobs, and I will let my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYUN), talk about China and other countries. As a matter of fact, these days, they do not have to come to the United States. They can stay where they are and they will have good American jobs because the workforce is there. And they will definitely be educated. Yet we are willing to cut Pell grant opportunities and some other things.

So there are a number of issues still on the table, but I hope we can talk tonight about the lack of an independent commission. I understand that there are going to be some additional partisan hearings this week here, if that is what you want to call them, here in the Congress on the House side. I hope that we will have an opportunity to talk about the lack of a Hurricane Katrina independent commission that 81-plus percent of Americans have called for.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here once again with my colleagues, and I look forward to some fruitful conversation with them. With that, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the gentleman, and I want to welcome back the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), who we missed desperately last night.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I was pining for you as well.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And I announced last night that my brother had a baby last week.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Oh, congratulations. That is fantastic.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes, that was my big announcement. His name is Nicholas John. So I will probably be saying that to every 30-Something for the next 6 months.

But we had a great discussion last night on so many different issues, and