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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOST).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 16, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE BOST to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

WIDESPREAD FLOODING IN LOUISIANA

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to my home State of Louisiana, where thousands of people throughout the State, and in my congressional district particularly, are dealing with the aftermath of widespread flooding.

Beginning on Wednesday of last week, heavy rains began falling across northeast Louisiana. By Friday, we had recorded over 2 feet of rain. Creeks

and lakes overflowed. Water topped levees and spilled into neighborhoods. State highways looked like rivers, and parking lots looked like ponds.

Since the flood began, I have visited a number of parishes throughout my district. Whether it was in north, central, or southeast Louisiana, the one constant was there were far, far too many people hurting.

As of yesterday, at least four people had died from the flood in Louisiana. Nearly 15,000 homes had been reported damaged, and the number will definitely grow. More than 6,800 people have requested help from FEMA, and that number will likely grow as well.

Lives were changed last week, and we have a long way to go to recover. The President has approved, at the request of the Governor, Federal disaster aid for most parishes affected. This is a great, great thing, and we need it. I appreciate that support very much.

I have lived in Louisiana all my life. I still live in a soybean field in northeast Louisiana not far from where I grew up in a cornfield, also close to my home. I have seen a lot of things in my time and I have seen a lot of rain come, but I have never seen as much rain as we received last week.

Unfortunately, Louisiana is all too familiar with disasters. In the last 10 years, we have seen five hurricanes, an oil spill, and now this horrific flooding. But each time we face adversity, Louisiana and her people respond. We follow Christ's commandment, which is to love and help one another.

I have been so inspired by the way our communities across Louisiana have answered the call to serve: packing sandbags in the wee hours of the morning, volunteering at shelters, cooking food for relief workers, housing stranded family members; and sometimes people who are not even known to these people, they are taking them into their homes. The acts of kindness just keep coming and coming, and we need more of them to keep coming.

There is one group of individuals I want to especially recognize, and that is our first responders. The National Guard has rescued over 3,295 people so far. Sheriffs, deputies, other law enforcement officials, and firefighters are still tallying their numbers because they have saved so many lives. These men and women have logged countless hours and put themselves in harm's way to save the lives of others.

I have heard stories of some officers using makeshift rafts to pull people from flooded homes and getting them out before waters overtook their home.

I have seen videos of the National Guard with Black Hawk helicopters rappelling into floodwaters and pulling people to safety who were clinging to trees. I saw one instance where a gentleman had been in a tree for up to 2 days.

It is just incredible what our first responders have done.

There is another story about our power company employees saving a man whose truck was swept off the road by water. Again, he had been in a tree, hanging on for life, for 2 full days before he was saved.

Story after story in parish after parish show the incredible strength our Louisianians have and the first responders' abilities and their caring and what they have done for our State.

The rains have stopped for now, but we are not in the clear by any means. The water is pushing most of our rivers over their flood stages in a big, big way. I hope another round of floods isn't on the way.

In Louisiana, we know how to bounce back from adversity, but we will only do so with the continued generosity of those who are in a position to help others. I ask the Nation to remember Louisiana in its prayers as we continue and start the process of rebuilding.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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