

The Honorable Gus M. Bilirakis Special Order on Homeowners' Insurance

June
7, 2007

Mr. Speaker, it is with great frustration and disappointment that I rise today. It has been three years since the devastating 2004 hurricane season that ravaged my state, which forced homeowners' insurance rates to skyrocket to unmanageable levels. And this body has failed to act. Along with many of my Gulf Coast colleagues, I have pleaded with the Democrat Leadership to act on legislation which might ease this financially crippling crisis. And this body has failed to act. Countless of my constituents have implored me to help relieve this crisis so they do not have to leave the areas they love. They wish to raise their children and retire in the great state of Florida, but they fear that they simply will not be able afford to do so. And this body has failed to act.

The front page of today's Wall Street Journal forewarns of the impending economic emergency should a major storm hit the United States. The story correctly notes, "If insurers of last resort face major storm losses, those costs could get spread to a broad cross-section of the public." This is just another warning given to this Congress that something must be done immediately. And yet this body has failed to act.

I ask unanimous consent to submit the entire article for the record.

One of the areas most affected by this crisis is Pasco County, in my district. Last month, the County Commissioners passed a resolution calling for Congress to take action. I ask unanimous consent to submit the entire resolution for the record.

Mr. Speaker, the following are excerpts from the Pasco County resolution:

"WHEREAS, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the Southern Governors Association, the Florida Legislature, as well as other state legislatures, have passed resolutions recognizing the importance of developing additional insurance capacity to insure the viability of coverage for catastrophic natural perils by endorsing the concept of a national disaster plan;
and

"WHEREAS, Hurricanes

Katrina, Rita and Wilma caused over \$200 billion in total economic losses, including insured and uninsured losses; and

"WHEREAS, the United States federal government has provided and will continue to provide billions of dollars and resources to help our nation recover from catastrophes; and

"WHEREAS, multiple proposals have been introduced in the United States Congress over the past decade to address catastrophic risk insurance, including the creation of a national catastrophic reinsurance fund.

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Pasco County, Florida supports the adoption of legislation by the United States Congress to create a reasonably priced national reinsurance program that will help Americans find private insurance protection from natural catastrophes for their homes while reducing the demand on governmental resources to assist victims after an event occurs."

Mr. Speaker, along with cosponsoring legislation to establish a national catastrophe fund, I have introduced legislation to provide tax incentives for Americans to strengthen their property.

Enactment of my bill, H.R. 913, will reduce homeowners' insurance rates and could help save lives.

I implore this body to act on these and other insurance-related bills to help Americans in need.

I pray that it doesn't take another Katrina-type catastrophe before this body heeds my request.