

Madam Speaker, after 9/11 there were calls to connect the dots. And as we approach the first anniversary of Katrina, with wildfires raging across the West, it is time to connect the dots dealing with natural disaster.

Former National Parks Director, Roger Kennedy, wrote an outstanding op-ed in the New York Times yesterday entitled "Houses to Burn," and recently published a book "Wildfires in America." He documents that we in government are part of this problem. We construct roads and infrastructure into hazardous areas. We don't have appropriate building codes, and often we don't even enforce the building codes that we have. We even build, as the Federal Government did, Los Alamos Research Laboratories in the midst of an area that has burned repeatedly decade after decade for centuries. And it is only going to get worse by sprawl and global warming.

It is time for government at all levels to connect the dots, to reduce and ultimately protect Americans from wildfires and other natural disasters, to make our communities more livable and our families safer, healthier and more economically secure.