

TIME TO FUND FAT AL GORE RELIEF LIKE WE SHOULD HAVE FUNDED IRAQ, AFGHAN WARS

Peter King, House Republican, called today for New Yorkers to stop funding House Republicans because they refused to pass a Sandy relief bill last night.

“These Republicans have no problem finding New York when they’re out raising millions of dollars,” King said on Fox News. “They’re in New York all the time filling their pockets with money from New Yorkers. I’m saying right now, anyone from New York or New Jersey who contributes one penny to congressional Republicans is out of their minds. Because what they did last night was put a knife in the back of New Yorkers and New Jerseyans. It was an absolute disgrace.”

King also said he was ready to buck Republican leaders on every issue until the Sandy aid is approved.

“As far as I’m concerned, I’m on my own,” King said. “They’re going to have to go a long way to get my vote on anything.”

There’s a lot of choice things to say about what this signals for the GOP and King.

But rather indulge myself in that, I’d like to draw a larger lesson from it.

It is time to start funding relief for climate change related disasters ahead of time—for all the reasons we should have always funded the Afghan and Iraq Wars through the budget rather than supplemental funding.

We need to start setting aside realistic relief funds—say \$100 billion a year—to deal with these disasters, because if we don't, these supplementals will become yet more hostage situations for the GOP. After all, while it was probably a fracking-related disaster rather than a climate change one, Eric Cantor held his own constituents hostage when they needed funds after the earthquake in his district. If Cantor will hold them hostage (and they'll continue to reelect him), then they'll hold anyone hostage. And if a city as big and vital as NYC can get held hostage, then the towns that extreme weather are wiping off the map in Arkansas and Alabama will surely be hostages, too.

We can't let increasingly frequent not-quite-so-natural disasters be serial opportunities for Republicans to gut government.

Furthermore, until we start budgeting climate change relief as such, we'll never start accounting for how much we're already paying because of climate change. We'll never adequately balance whatever benefits come from—say—Shell drilling in the Arctic or KXL pipeline transit of the US if, as we did with the Iraq War, we simply don't treat relief for climate victims as a real cost, one we're going to have to pay year after year in increasing amounts.

Democrats are very happy to harp on Bush's wars, which were treated as but never really were free. But the government's commitment to drilling over better approaches to energy in the face of climate change—along with a failure to fund the obvious outcome of that drilling—is no less foolish.