

**ROUNDTABLE: “ANSWERING THE CALL: THE RE-
SPONSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZA-
TIONS TO THE 2005 GULF COAST HURRICANE”**

HEARING

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

**EXAMINING THE RESPONSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO
THE 2005 GULF COAST HURRICANES**

MARCH 7, 2006

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TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2006

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee roundtable convened, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Michael B. Enzi (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Enzi and Isakson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning.

I want to welcome all of you to the roundtable discussion on "Answering the Call: The Response of Community-Based Organizations to the 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes."

I remember calls that Senator Kennedy and I were exchanging during the hurricanes, trying to figure out what would come under the responsibility of our committee and how we might be able to handle that, and we started with roundtables about 2 days after the hurricanes hit, and we had the education package together faster than any other committee had it together, and then we followed that quickly with the health package. But we watched in agony over the things that happened, and we have been following the progress, and in some cases lack of it, since that time and have been trying to figure out what we could do to make things better.

I want to congratulate all of you and your organizations for the work and effort that you have put in. I want to particularly thank you for the testimonies that we received. I have been through it, and I appreciate the suggestions that were in there; they were very helpful and remind us of the work that you have ahead.

Today the committee holds another in a series of hearings and roundtable discussions on the hurricanes that caused that devastation in the Gulf Coast region and our efforts to respond to the needs of those whose lives were forever changed by that catastrophe.

Today's roundtable will be taking a closer look at the role of community-based organizations in responding to the great needs of the region in the aftermath of these powerful storms.

Today we are 6 months away from the destruction caused by the hurricane season and just a few months away from the next as the

committee continues to look back on the hurricanes and the destruction they caused. To ensure that we are better-prepared for the next challenge, we will be discussing the role of the community-based organizations that came to the aid of the people of Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi. These organizations located in cities and towns all across the country took in many of the people who evacuated the region.

In addition, millions of Americans donated their time and resources to these organizations so that those who were in need of assistance could receive it as soon as possible.

I will never forget the trip that Senator Kennedy and I took with several of our colleagues to the New Orleans region the weekend after the storm had hit. The devastation that we saw there was unlike anything we had ever seen before. There is nothing to compare with the fury of Mother Nature.

Fortunately, our community-based organizations were quick to act and an important part of the cure for what was wrong with the Gulf Coast region. All over the United States, people of every region wanted to know what they could do to help. More often than not, they turned to their community-based organizations to determine what could be done as a community to address so great a need. I know that people started sending things before things could even be received; everyone was eager to help.

There are many accomplishments that these organizations have made that deserve our praise and appreciation for all they did to help so many.

We will also look at what worked and did not work with regard to the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. This is an organization with important responsibilities in the national response plan for facilitating communication among community-based organizations and with the Government.

As a former mayor and now, as a Senator from Wyoming, I have seen for myself the devastation that severe weather can bring a community. Last year, Wright, WY, a little town 38 miles south of Gillette, which is my home town, was hit by a tornado that did a lot of damage to the town. Plans to rebuild Wright have included support and cooperation on the local, State, and Federal level, much the same as will be required to continue to recover from the Gulf Coast tragedy.

That is why we have brought together some of our Nation's most experienced relief organizations. We are looking forward to hearing your suggestions as to what we should do next as we continue the reconstruction and recovery of the Gulf Coast region. We have no time to wait. Every minute is precious, as it brings us closer and closer to the 2006 hurricane season, which again is only a few months away.

We could not have this roundtable without you, so let me thank all of you who took time from your schedules to be with us today. You will be the source of a lot of information; as I mentioned, you already have been with the statements that I have received. That will help to guide the committee's efforts and provide a record of what happened during the hurricanes and since, as we begin work restoring and rebuilding what was lost.

The committee will continue to follow events in the Gulf Coast region and work together to address the issues that demand our attention.

I definitely want to thank the ranking member, Senator Kennedy, for his leadership and concern and active involvement in these issues and the early communication that he had with me and the cooperation that he always provides on all the issues. We have multiple hearings going on during the day, and of course, he has seniority on all of the committees that he is on, but he will be joining us later and will make an opening statement at that time.

In the discussion, we have requested that participants confine their comments as briefly as possible, hopefully within 2 minutes. And you will not need to make an opening statement; your opening statement will be made a part of the record.

I would also mention that if you don't get a chance to express or rebut or whatever on any of the comments that are made, you can also submit comments afterward that will become a part of the record. We need your information, and that is why, instead of having a panel with three or four people on it and mercilessly raking them with questions, we invite in a lot of experts to get as many ideas as we possibly can. And we will keep the record open after the hearing is over so that additional comments can be made, and also so that Members of the Senate can ask additional questions after they and their staff have an opportunity to go over what you say today; and that helps us to clear up some of the other points so that we can get it as right as possible. Seldom is Federal legislation perfect, but I want you to know that we do our best. It is a difficult process. It is also a little frustrating—we usually know when we are going over a piece of legislation that there is somebody in the audience that knows a loophole to it, and they do not tell us about it until after they can take advantage of the loophole. So those who help us to cover loopholes, we really appreciate that.

You have name tags in front of you. If anyone wishes to be recognized, stand it on end, and I have some people who will be helping me keep track of which ones go up and in what order. And again, I would appreciate it if you would limit your responses to 2 minutes so we can get as many responses as possible, and then you can expand on those in writing if you would like to.

I will introduce the panel of participants, and people will be able to see what a wide variety of organizations we have. We are extremely fortunate today to have such a distinguished panel of peers.

The participants are: William Daroff, from United Jewish Communities; Heather Feltman, from Lutheran Disaster Response; Tom Hazelwood, from the United Methodist Committee on Relief; Major Todd Hawks, the national public affairs secretary and associate community relations secretary for the Salvation Army; Mostafa Mahbood, from Islamic Relief USA; Andy Miller, executive director of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster; Craig Nemitz, disaster services manager to America's Second Harvest; Kay Wilkins, director of the Southeast Louisiana Chapter of the American Red Cross; Jayne Wright, director of the Louisiana State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and head of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

We also have with us Cynthia Fagnoni, director for education, workforce and income security issues at the Government Accountability Office. Ms. Fagnoni has been kind enough to bring her expertise to the roundtable and has agreed to serve as moderator should I be called away during the discussion—and we do have a vote that is coming up this morning, so I will have to be away for a few minutes.

We also have Lorna Bourg, president and CEO of Southern Mutual Help Association in New Iberia, LA; Almetra Franklin, executive director of St. Mary Community Action Agency in Franklin, LA; Reverend Welton Gaddy, president of Interfaith Alliance; Thomas E. Green, assistant director of the Office of Community Services in Little Rock, AR; Tanya Harris, the lead organizer in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now.

To each and every one of you, welcome, and thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

The question for the roundtable was outlined in the invitation letter you received. The question was: “What was the nature of your work in the areas affected by storms, and how did you coordinate that work with other charitable groups and local, State and Federal agencies, and how did it work?”

What we are really looking for here is what were the solutions, what worked, what did not. Often, what did not work is of more help than what did work, because that is what needs to be worked on.

Again, I would like to thank those of you who listed some specific changes. That was very helpful. And all of you will have a chance to add to what you said. Hopefully, this is almost a brainstorming session, so that ideas that other people have will help you to think of additional things that you can do.

So, with the remaining time, I would like to open the floor to comments that you might have.

Yes?

**KAY WILKINS, DIRECTOR, SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA CHAPTER
FOR THE AMERICAN RED CROSS**

Ms. WILKINS. Thank you again for the opportunity to come and really tell our story. As you look around the table, you see a lot of faces and a lot of hands that actually helped with our Katrina response in Louisiana.

On your question, what worked and what did not, I can tell you that what did not work actually helped us work a little bit better, and that was that once communications were down after Katrina, it was really important that we continue to rely on the networks and the connections that we had made before the hurricane season so that we could expect that help would be on the way. We knew the players. We knew what to expect from those players.

We knew, for instance, that Second Harvest was going to be bringing us food; we knew that the VOAD agencies were going to be available once we could get through this. It was really just kind of keeping balls in the air, making sure for the American Red Cross that people were sheltered and fed until help could come.

So those connections that we made pre-Katrina are what worked when the communication system failed.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wilkins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAY WILKINS

DEAR CHAIRMAN ENZI AND SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you in March as a participant in your roundtable discussions focusing on the community based organizations response to relief and reconstruction efforts in the Gulf Coast due to this past year's hurricanes. I am looking forward to sharing lessons learned as well as gaining valuable information from my colleagues and your committee as together we plan and prepare for the 2006 hurricane season. I want to take this opportunity to also provide you with my personal statement.

As Chief Executive Officer of the Southeast Louisiana Chapter of the American Red Cross for the past 6 years, and as its Emergency Services Director for 3 years prior to that, I have had the unique opportunity of being able to work with local, State and national partners during the past 9 years to develop and help implement preparedness measures in our chapter that helped lay the groundwork for the operations we began, and continue to support today, the American Red Cross' response to Hurricane Katrina.

About the American Red Cross

For more than 124 years, the mission of the American Red Cross has been to help Americans prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies. In 1905, Congress chartered the American Red Cross to provide a system of disaster response and to mitigate suffering caused by disaster. We continue to meet this mandate today. We have a long and proven track record of immediate response to major disasters, both natural and man made. In towns and cities across the United States, the more than 800 chapters of the American Red Cross responded to more than 72,000 disasters in the past year, ranging from residential house fires to the devastating hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast.

Governed by volunteers and supported by community donations, the Red Cross is a network of more than 800 chapters, eight regional service areas, and 35 Blood Services regions dedicated to saving lives. The Red Cross provides a unique community-based network to support all-hazard preparedness in your districts, to your constituents, each and every day. As an integral member of the first response community with expertise in meeting the human needs associated with disasters, we are integrated into State and local government agency disaster planning exercises and response efforts. We partner with local, State, and Federal Government to provide emergency shelter, food, and health and mental health services as well as short-term financial assistance to address basic human needs.

While we are a single organization, I will limit my remarks following to my role as chief executive officer of one of these 800 chapters in our network, the Southeast Louisiana Chapter, headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana.

My Experience Operating in the Gulf Coast

As the winds of Hurricane Katrina were racing across Florida on Thursday, August 26, our chapter began preparations for the possibility of its landfall near the metropolitan New Orleans area. We staffed emergency operations centers (EOC) in the twelve parishes that comprise our chapter's jurisdiction as they opened and began outlining our response with other community and governmental partners for the 1.2 million residents within this area.

On Friday, August 27, the timbre of our conversations changed as the possibility that New Orleans could receive a direct hit from Hurricane Katrina was mentioned with increasing frequency. Our chapter began its rundown of checklist items—from making sure our disaster volunteers were both ready to help and aware of pre-set staging locations in the event of an evacuation, to making sure our own employees had prepared their homes and families for this threat. As the chief executive officer, I notified our board of directors of current plans. I also called our staff together on that Friday afternoon for what would be our last full staff meeting at our chapter headquarters, located on Canal Street in downtown New Orleans. During this meeting, I answered questions and advised our staff of the current situation with the storm, reminding each of us of our responsibility to open shelters pre-landfall and reviewing our Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). (Our Southeast Louisiana Chapter's COOP was developed to ensure that needed resources for business continuity were evacuated with our chapter when the likelihood of such an evacuation seemed imminent.) Once chapter staff had supplied our management team with

weekend contact numbers, they were given the opportunity to leave early to prepare their homes and pack their bags. Each would be notified on Saturday should the hurricane's path and threat dictate an activation of our COOP.

On Saturday, August 28, after consultation with my Emergency Services director and my board chairman, I activated our chapter's COOP. Hurricane Katrina was indeed heading toward our chapter area as a Category 5 storm, with winds of over 150 miles per hour. Because the American Red Cross had long ago determined that no area below Interstate 12 in our chapter was safe from storm surge and flooding due to hurricanes, activating the COOP meant relocating our chapter to an area outside this "risk" zone. Our American Red Cross representatives at the EOCs in the "risk" areas met with their local emergency preparedness officials for the last time that Saturday morning and then traveled to our chapter's staging site 35 miles north of New Orleans in Covington, Louisiana. I attended a press conference that afternoon with New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin and Governor Kathleen Blanco as the recommended evacuation order was given to our citizens of the New Orleans area. At the end of the press conference, I spoke with both Mayor Nagin and Governor Blanco and again reviewed our own evacuation plan for the northshore location. At 5:00 that afternoon, I turned off the lights to our building on Canal Street for the last time.

Throughout the days during and following our Saturday evacuation to a safe site north of New Orleans, our chapter staff of 42 was called upon to perform what can only be described as Herculean tasks. We opened 26 shelters to persons seeking safety from the storm—shelters whose populations at times exceeded 5,000. Ever mindful that their own homes stood in the path of this deadly storm, my staff continued to man their stations, stretching resources to the max, knowing that each person who sought their hand in comfort was also lost in a shared fear of the unknown. Shelters originally designed to house 200 residents made room for 50–100 more. While many of those who sought shelter with us before the storm hit came with supplies, hundreds more brought to us after the storm, arrived with nothing except that which could be hoisted on a rope into a boat or onto a helicopter from a rooftop. There were many "walking wounded" among our residents—and time and time again, that same Red Cross employee or volunteer who feared he or she had lost their own home in this storm, were the same individuals who offered a hand and a shoulder to someone less fortunate.

For a short period of time, I was out of communication with my staff, only able to hear their stories from others' accounts. This was perhaps the darkest time for me. Being responsible for the lives of 42 very dedicated persons who put their trust in my guidance—and not being able to reach out to touch them to make sure they were okay—was incredibly difficult. I worked night and day to ensure that resources were sent to each of our staff in the shelters they were operating, and I depended on the knowledge that our training and preparations which occurred before this storm would get us through the tough times.

I was able to meet with our staff for the first time 5 days after Katrina. We all gathered under an old oak tree in northern Washington parish, about 70 miles from our chapter headquarters on Canal Street—but light-years away from our last staff meeting that fateful Friday afternoon. As I looked at the faces of the individuals who in my mind are the untold heroes of Katrina—those who held the hands of countless individuals whose own were shaking because of a storm with unheard of viciousness; those who provided comfort, shelter and security in a time when chaos ruled; and those who remained calm despite the uncertainties of their own homes and families—I looked into the very essence of what is good in our country, and I saw the untouchable spirit of the American Red Cross that drives someone to risk all they know and love to help their fellow man. I looked into a group of people who, for a brief moment in time, were able to give hope through the offer of hot food, shelter, an encouraging hand and an open heart.

As I told our staff what I knew at that moment—of their homes flooded, of neighborhoods and communities they loved lost, of an era of innocence and safety we all knew vanquished—I also told them of my awe and respect for what each of them were able to accomplish in the face of unspeakable odds. I asked each of them to remember what happened here, and to never forget what we were able to overcome, as part of the American Red Cross . . .

And then I told them help was on the way.

Getting to that place was not accomplished alone—there were many partners, both governmental and community-based organizations who helped contribute to our success that day. And, as we mark the 6th month anniversary of a disaster called Katrina which has forever changed the path of our city, there are many other partners who continue to support our recovery and without whom we would be unable to take the significant steps toward becoming whole again.

Allow me to highlight a few:

In late January 2004, our chapter convened a group of individuals who shared one common theme—an expressed need to find evacuation options for people with no transportation resources when an evacuation order was given due to an approaching hurricane. From an original group of about 40 to a nucleus of 10, we met weekly during this time until September 2004 to develop a grassroots plan that helped address that need. Named “Operation Brother’s Keeper” (OBK), the plan was simple. With the help of the faith communities, identify persons within the inner city faith congregations who had no transportation options during an evacuation; partner those same persons with congregation members who had space to offer for transportation out of the city; match this at-risk inner city congregation with a partner host congregation outside the risk area; train that host congregation to become a shelter for those in need; and, support that shelter as an American Red Cross shelter. A local foundation funded a grant for OBK and we officially began meeting with a defined set of expectations and outcomes in March 2005. While it is not the role of the American Red Cross to evacuate areas at risk, we had much to contribute.

We were 5 months into the grant cycle and on target with defined expectations when Hurricane Katrina hit. While no concrete plans had been developed with individual congregations, we had been able to train community educators who would also help with congregational surveys and hurricane preparedness seminars. In addition, we had identified our first match of risk congregation and host congregation and were in the process of setting up shelter management training.

In February 2005, our chapter met with the Louisiana State Police and the Louisiana Department of Homeland Security and Office of Emergency Preparedness to begin drafting a single map which could be used by all segments of the community and media for evacuation planning. Subsequent meetings involved our State’s Government relations chapter lead, the Louisiana Capital Area Chapter, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD). The result of this process was an all-hazards brochure that contained an evacuation map detailing the phased evacuation process for Louisiana’s coastal areas, including the contraflow system, which had been redesigned by LA DOTD and the State Police. The American Red Cross was able to contribute valuable preparedness information and provide a portion of the funding. An additional grant from the Department of Homeland Security and the LA DOTD allowed the printing of 1.5 million copies. During the months of July and August, prior to Hurricane Katrina, we were able to distribute nearly 1 million of these to residents of Southeast Louisiana.

Many of these copies were distributed by our faith community to congregation members through Operation Brother’s Keeper. In addition, educational presentations were held in many venues to help our citizens understand the need to evacuate during a hurricane event and the critical need of preparedness.

Being ready for any category hurricane or tropical storm is not something our chapter takes lightly. This past hurricane season was no exception. In the spring of 2005, we participated in the State’s Hurricane Pam exercise and used this participation as an opportunity to test our own volunteer and staff’s disaster readiness level. In June, we conducted our own disaster exercise, “Hurricane Mike,” a 12 parish simulated evacuation and disaster shelter response. Tropical Storm Cindy, which affected our area also in June, again tested our disaster volunteers and staff’s ability to respond quickly as we set up shelters in the affected portion of our chapter jurisdiction. Hurricane Dennis had our chapter once again packing our own evacuation boxes and preparing to evacuate from our downtown New Orleans location to a site 35 miles north of the city. By the time the evacuation order had been given for Hurricane Katrina, our chapter had experienced four evacuations since June. We felt prepared to meet the challenge.

In hindsight, we did so exceedingly well.

Coordinated Activities With Other Community-Based Organizations

Disaster preparedness and response is not the sole responsibility of any one organization. It is the collective responsibility of the entire community and of each and every citizen. Hurricane Katrina brought that note home many times. In the months prior to Hurricane Katrina hitting our city, our chapter had met with many of our community partners to ensure a coordinated response during disasters. Collaborating with other organizations on response efforts is nothing new to our chapter. Before Hurricane Katrina changed the New Orleans area population, the Southeast Louisiana Chapter was the fourth busiest Red Cross disaster response chapter in the country—responding to a fire or other natural disaster every 8 hours. While our chapter was the only organization in the city to respond directly, we collaborated with other organizations active in disasters to help provide additional resources to those whose homes had been affected or destroyed. We had working memorandums

of understanding (MOUs) with many of our social service providers to help provide additional resources of food, clothing, household furnishing and emotional support to those in need. With many of these community-based organizations, we were able to leverage our assessment of damage to help increase the services provided to one of our clients.

In the days prior to Katrina hitting our area, our chapter met with the local agency that administers 2-1-1 to review our chapter's disaster evacuation plans. We provided this agency with preparedness information so that those who called this help line would understand how to access evacuation information. In addition, we met with our local food bank, Second Harvesters, to review our current MOU and identify additional ways we could work jointly in the event of a large scale disaster. We spoke to other community partners—United Ways (of which five are located in our chapter area), Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, the Southern Baptists and, of important note, to our governmental leaders and partners—including the Mayor of New Orleans and Parish Presidents of many of the other 11 parishes our chapter is responsible for. In each of the conversations, we reiterated our own evacuation plan for our chapter and our commitment to the people of the communities we serve. In the days and weeks following Hurricane Katrina and subsequently Hurricane Rita, these conversations helped lay the basic foundations of our disaster response. We are still working with all of our community partners today as we continue to feed more than 7,000 hot meals each day in the Southeast Louisiana Chapter area and provide bulk distribution of clean-up and basic household items. We have been the recipient of many volunteers and donated goods from these organizations—all of us united by one common goal . . . to help our community recover.

Preparing for the 2006 Hurricane Season

Each week, our chapter plays host to a group of non-profit agency executive directors who meet to help define community needs and build collaboratives to address those needs. Each week, we take steps to prepare our agencies, our employees and constituencies, and our communities for this year's hurricane season.

This is a unique season—for many reasons.

Many of those who have moved back into our area now live in a trailer and have given very little thought of evacuation planning. Our chapter is seeking to address that now by going into areas with a large number of trailers (either in villages or on the front lawns) and distributing informational brochures on hurricane safety. By creating "safe neighbor networks," we hope to define steps families can take to be prepared for this hurricane season.

With the condition of our levee system still very much in question, and the coastal erosion that occurred as a result of this past season's hurricanes, it is critical that the residents in these vulnerable areas develop an evacuation plan and be ready to put that plan into action at an earlier stage than ever before. Tropical storms that used to send us into our homes for safe shelter will now send us seeking safety out of the area—from a physical well-being standpoint as well as an emotional stability standpoint.

Our citizens' sense of security has been shaken to its core by Mother Nature. When evidence of her ability to turn our world upside down once again is presented, nerves will be on edge. We continue to work with our mental health professionals to find ways to help our communities cope with the emotional traumas this year's season may bring, engendering yet another opportunity for us to partner with newer community based organizations, such as Louisiana's Spirit.

It is critical to continue work in the community around Operation Brothers Keeper. We know this is a grassroots effort for evacuation planning that can work—and did to some extent during Hurricane Katrina. We have begun meeting with our OBK table of original partners and are inviting others to join us as we define the obstacles to evacuation planning for those with no transportation resources, utilizing community based solutions. The faith community performed exceptionally in response to Hurricane Katrina, and we are honored to partner with these individuals and congregations to attack a problem that has no easy answer. Bi-weekly meetings with this group continue.

As we move into the hurricane season this year, our chapter continues to work with our national organization to identify lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and implement changes that will improve our overall preparedness. These lessons are the ones taken from the stories of the families who lived through the nightmare of Katrina and from those who did not.

Our responsibility to the American people is to make sure they are heard . . . and heeded. Again, thank you for your invitation. I look forward to meeting with you on March 7th.

Sincerely,

KAY W. WILKINS,
Chief Executive Officer,
Southeast Louisiana Chapter American Red Cross.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

**ALMETRA FRANKLIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ST. MARY
 COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY, FRANKLIN, LA**

Ms. FRANKLIN. I just want to expand a little further on that. That was the same situation in our community, which is very rural. We had those partnerships in place already, and it really worked for us in that we established who would do what early on. As soon as the people started coming in, we met with local government, our mayor designated the CSBG unit, the Community Action Agency, as the first responder. So we were able to assign everybody their roles and responsibilities, and that way, things moved quickly for us and moved smoothly for us.

But some of the kinks that we had—the organizations that we were looking to provide us with the resources were not there as early on as we had hoped, but because those partnerships were in place, we were able to move and assist our clients quickly.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Franklin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALMETRA FRANKLIN

Organizational Information

St. Mary Community Action Committee Association, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 tax-exempt, human service organization that has effectively served as a non-profit instrument for the delivery of quality human services to low-income residents of St. Mary since 1967. In recent years, the agency has developed presences in Vermilion Parish via its Head Start program and Assumption Parish via its Louisiana Partners in Prevention program. Currently the agency employs 329 people in full- and part-time capacities.

ST. MARY COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE ASSOCIATION, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Mary Community Action Agency is to alleviate poverty for low-income citizens through strategic planning and implementation of projects and services that will strengthen, promote quality, renew, and guide families into self-sufficiency.

St. Mary/Vermilion Community Action Agency/Head Start currently operates 52 social service programs with funding from Federal, State, and local levels, as well as from philanthropic organizations. It is governed by a tri-part board of 21 members representing the public, private and target sectors of the community. St. Mary Community Action Agency has five departments: Administrative, Fiscal, Head Start, Housing, and Special Services. The Head Start department operates 16 centers; 14 of which it owns. A sampling of programs and services offered by the agency include child development, literacy training, education, substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, employment training, transportation, housing counseling for renters, homeowners and prospective homeowners, homeless shelters, weatherization assistance, economic development (Revolving Loan program), emergency assistance, money-management assistance, USDA commodity distribution, elderly feedings, and utility assistance.

The largest of the agency's five departments, St. Mary/Vermilion Head Start serves two economically depressed parishes with a combined population of nearly 110,000. The percentage of employment in St. Mary and Vermilion parishes is approximately 8 percent lower than the national average. See table below for further demographic data on St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes.

ST. MARY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- HUD—Best Practice for Developing a Multi-Family Unit (Sparrow Gardens);
- National Head Start Association—Outstanding Grantee Award;
- Faith Place—15 newly constructed single-family subdivision;
- Certified Housing Counseling Agency;
- Certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO);
- Welfare to Work—trained and found employment for 629 residents of Iberia, St. Mary and lower St. Martin Parishes (60 percent are still employed!);
- Only Robert Wood Johnson Free-To-Grow site in Louisiana;
- 95 percent of Head Start teachers have acquired college degrees through our Staff Development Program;
- Cars For A Cause transportation model successfully placed 45 households in cars. (All 45 households met program standards and now have clear vehicle titles.)



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1. Map of St. Mary Parish, Highlighted. <http://www.answers.com/topic/st-mary-parish-louisiana>.

Figure 2. Map of Vermilion Parish, Highlighted. <http://www.answers.com/topic/vermilion-parish-louisiana>.

Census Category	St. Mary Parish ¹	Vermilion Parish ²
Population	52,833	53,807
Under 5 years	3,965	3,830
Families Below Poverty Level	2,903	2,523
Median Household Income in 1999 (dollars)	\$28,072	\$29,500
Families Below Poverty Level With Related Children Under 5 Years of Age (1999)	1,076	886
In Labor Force (population 16 years and over) [percentage]	55.9%	56.1%

¹ St. Mary Parish 2000 Census Information. <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

² Vermilion Parish 2000 Census Information. <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

Problem

St. Mary Parish was the first fully functioning parish on Highway 90 West from New Orleans. Therefore the parish experienced a great initial influx of evacuees immediately before and after Hurricane Katrina. Franklin, the city in which St. Mary Community Action Agency's Central Office is located, had a pre-Katrina population of approximately 8,354.³ In the weeks following Hurricane Katrina, St. Mary Community Action Agency staff processed disaster relief applications that accounted for 3,100 people seeking shelter in St. Mary Parish.⁴ This influx of refugees caused a 5.8 percent increase in the population of St. Mary Parish.

³ 2000 US Census. <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

⁴ On file in database at St. Mary Community Action Agency, 2005, Franklin, LA. Figure 3. Map of Coastal Louisiana. <http://images.google.com>.



Figure 3

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck, St. Mary Community Action Agency banded together with many organizations, businesses, churches and private citizens to help those refugees that have arrived in the communities of St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes. Every department in the agency has experienced a remarkable increase in its workload in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. St. Mary Community Action Agency response to this crisis included:

- Increasing the hours of operation.
- Distributing items donated by Community Action Partnership members from over 30 States.
- Acting as the point of entry for the St. Mary Parish relief system.
- Processing disaster applications for the refugees and developing a database.
- Referring clients to other partners in the St. Mary Parish relief system.
- Providing clients with a city map; list of other relief venues, relief referral tickets.
- Making counseling available to evacuees in the shelters.
- Serving as a warehouse for disaster relief supplies (Central Office Site).
- Assisting with the FEMA, Red Cross, and Food Stamp application processes.
- Utilizing Tweety Bird and Goldilocks Head Start centers as shelters.
- Providing Low Income Home Energy Assistance to hurricane-impacted clients.
- Employing funds received from the National Head Start Association for costs associated with the evacuees' temporary housing expenses.
- Preparing and serving hot meals to evacuees.
- Hosting a delegation of medical staff, counselors and spiritual advisors from California.
- Hosting child behavioral specialist Charlie Jury and Michele Scalzo of Cen-Clear Child Services, Inc. of Clearfield, Pennsylvania.
- Sponsoring the Adopt-An-Evacuee program (23 families adopted).
- Hiring displaced evacuees from the New Orleans area (several are still employed by the agency).
- Accepting 105 Head Start age children into the classroom in both St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes.
- Nearly 6 months after Hurricane Katrina, assisting those still displaced in St. Mary Parish with rent, fuel passes, medical prescriptions and other needs determined at the time of interview.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figure 4. Caseworkers assist refugees at St. Mary Community Action Agency's Central Office Site.

Figure 5. Employees unload relief supplies sent by Community Action Organizations from Ohio.

Weeks after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita arrived, the refugees housed in St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes are attempting to negotiate new lives in these rural communities. Neither St. Mary Parish nor Vermilion Parish has any metropolitan areas—at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more inhabitants.⁵ The communities in these two parishes, like many other rural communities that are hosting refugees, are finding it very difficult to absorb the population surge.

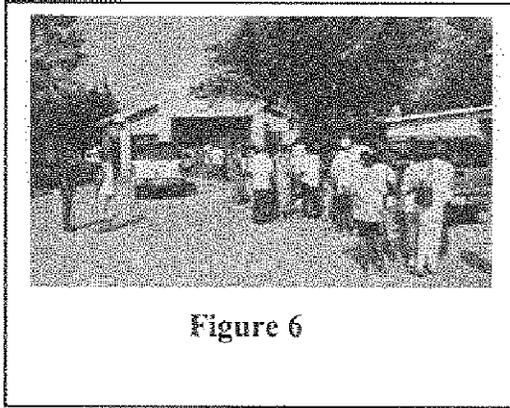


Figure 6

A large percentage of the housing stock is either inhabited or substandard. Rural communities do not have parking garages. Street congestion is on the rise. Local grocery stores do not have the storage space to stock enough items that correspond to the population growth. Locals must drive to other communities to find grocery items. Households are bursting at the seams with relatives and friends from the affected areas. Like most gas stations in the region, rural gas stations in St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes exhaust their inventory more rapidly than normal. At the time of writing, the St. Mary Parish School Board has accepted 844 new students into the public school system.

⁵Definition of metropolitan area. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/aboutmetro.html>. Figure 6. Clients wait outside St. Mary Community Action Agency's Central Office Site for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Assistance.

Some of the agency's partners in the relief effort are:

- Local Churches;
- St. Mary Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness;
- St. Mary Parish Office of Family Support;
- National Head Start Association Members;
- City of Franklin;
- Franklin Fire Department;
- St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Department;
- Bayou Teche Community Health Network;
- St. Mary Parish Medicaid Office;
- Acadiana Works;
- Teche Action Clinic;
- Fournet's Pharmacy;
- Discovery Daycare;
- Chitimacha Fire Protection;
- St. Mark's Lodge #25;
- Office of Dr. Donna Tesi;
- The Banner-Tribune;
- KBZE 105.9 FM;
- Community Action Partnership Members;
- Highland County Community Action Organization (Ohio);
- Lima/Allen Council on Community Affairs, Inc. (Ohio);
- Community Action Organization of Scioto County, Inc. (Ohio);
- Relief on Wheels;
- Columbian Chemicals Company;
- Church of God in Christ (California);
- St. Mary Parish Government;
- Senator Butch Gautreaux;
- Representative Karla Dartez;
- Representative Jack Smith;
- Senator Nick Gautreaux;
- Boys & Girls Club;
- London Grove Township, Pennsylvania.

To date, St. Mary Community Action Agency has served over 5,000 victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita from over 50 communities from Franklin, Louisiana to Biloxi, Mississippi.

The Future

How can we respond more effectively during future hurricane seasons? Coordination is needed both within and between agencies. So many questions need to be answered. Learning from the crisis particular to New Orleans, we feel that chains of command need to be established and shared. Emergency coalitions need to be formed (building on and learning from) the coalition formed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Phone trees need to be created and shared. **The basis of what needs to be done revolves around establishing thorough plans of who needs to do what when and for every agency (including every employee) to know its own role in the wake of a disaster.**

Once these plans have been created they need to be distributed to each agency, to the State, published in the newspaper and made available on the web. After a 1 month disaster plan publication/training period, disaster drills need to occur every 3 months. After each drill evaluations should be made and each entity scored on its effectiveness.

These results should be made public. The code word for a disaster plan should be *cohesiveness*. Good deeds done by one person or agency will certainly help in the wake of a disaster. Cohesiveness at every level will help tremendously.

LORNA BOURG, PRESIDENT AND CEO, SOUTHERN MUTUAL HELP ASSOCIATION, NEW IBERIA, LA

Ms. BOURG. I very much want to build on what you said initially, Kay, that the networks that existed before the disaster were critical. So what we need to spend as a Nation, making sure that the infrastructure of Community Development Corporations and their connection to philanthropy at its best are in place before disasters occur.

In some of the statements that I submitted, Senator, there is discussion about several policies that would really be helpful. One is FEMA working through that network of banks, philanthropic, and Community Development Corporations that are on the ground and have the community capital, the knowledge, to know who is in the community and who needs help.

In the rural areas, we are used to getting “least and last” of everything, and that is still happening. We are still arriving in rural communities in 11 parishes and counties and finding 80-year-old women sitting under a carport, trying to drag out moldy furniture, and no one there to help.

So even today, there is just nothing there. If it had not been for philanthropy at its best, like the Heron Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation—Oxfam America was fantastic, and so was Rural LISC, Local Initiative Support Corporation. They pulled experts together, people from the tsunami region, and brought them together to instruct me so that I could go back, and we created the Rural Recovery Response, and so far, we have done almost 200 homes with another 200 getting ready to be worked on—and that without a single dollar of government money.

So it was philanthropy at its best and the networks between that philanthropy and the Community Development Corporations that was extraordinarily helpful.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bourg follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LORNA BOURG

Mr. Chairman, ranking member and members of the committee, thank you for your interest, leadership and commitment to community-based organizations and their role in recovery from the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes. I want to tell you the untold story of Hurricane Rita and its devastating impact on rural Louisiana and how we can do better in our response as a Nation.

As President and Executive Director of Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc. (SMHA, a 501(c) not-for-profit community development corporation), based in New Iberia, Louisiana, I had the opportunity and duty to SMHA’s mission of creating healthy, prosperous rural communities to see first hand what had happened to our beloved Louisiana.

There are three important points I wish to make as a result:

1. Outside of the levee breaks, most rural Louisiana residents could recover with some normal assistance from Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Rita, coming only weeks later caused devastation of biblical proportions. As a lifelong resident of Louisiana, having experienced many terrible hurricanes, nothing comes close to the scale and scope of Hurricane Rita’s devastation of rural Louisiana.

After traveling extensively to Louisiana rural communities, villages, settlements, towns and cities, the SMHA team believes there are nearly 200,000 homes, facilities and businesses that are destroyed or inundated (not counting in New Orleans). The power of tsunami-like waves obliterated whole parishes (counties) leaving little evidence that structures existed. The marsh-mud liquid mixture inundated nearly every structure as well as agricultural lands all along coastal Louisiana.

After 40 years in rural community development, I can tell you it’s difficult to find any words that convey the *geographic scale and depth of trauma and turmoil Louisiana’s rural communities are experiencing*. You must see for yourself. I invite you to do so.

2. The failure of Federal policy, understanding, leadership and response even until this date is a gross negligence and, as one visiting film maker stated to me recently, “borders on criminality.”

- As a Nation we must have the capacity to respond in a timely manner to enormous disasters within our borders. We do not now have such capacity. I’ll recommend how we can do better.

- As a Nation we must be able to generate the resources for immediate and full recovery from such a level of devastation. We do not now generate such needed, expected and deserved resources. I’ll recommend how we can do better.

- America must have a level of policy and leadership equal to the level of response required. We have not yet seen such policy or leadership. I'll recommend how we can do better.

Failure to understand, structure bold policy and lead Americans to a timely and full recovery in this natural disaster telegraphs to our enemies that we are unprepared to deal with a recovery from a man-made disaster. It is a huge crack in America's homeland security.

3. As a Nation we can and must do better.

Southern Mutual Help Association recommends the following:

- First, pre-disaster preparation must **be more strategic to achieve timely response** in the face of such a national disaster. We need to use existing resources in local communities and in geographic regions. Federal dollars for relief, recovery and redevelopment must flow quickly to affected States. Pre-disaster selection, training, bonding and certification of local not-for-profit community development corporations (CDC's), financial institutions, first responders and relief organizations can accomplish a more timely response.

These entities have community social capital and intelligence to quickly determine who was impacted and to what extent. Recovery dollars could be quickly transferred electronically to banking institutions within States and disbursed to support first responders, relief organizations and CDC's. This would minimize non-sensical and seemingly arbitrary cash assistance. FEMA temporary shelter units could be distributed with more community-based intelligence. (Currently in Iberia Parish large numbers of FEMA trailers sit idly at the airport while locally, hundreds of families are in desperate need of such shelter assistance on their own land.)

A strategy of "down-to-the-closest-local-community" distribution of resources creates the national infrastructure to respond in a more timely manner. Having such pre-disaster strategy in each region in America allows needed resources closest to an affected area to be delivered most quickly.

- Second, no new bureaucracies need be created to achieve a level of policy and leadership equal to such a national disaster.

Americans have always responded with generosity to disasters. Just witness the volunteers from across our Nation who are in Louisiana to help us, the fundraisers and checks from adults, children, churches, foundations, colleges and corporations. Yet it is not nearly enough.

I remember my grandmother telling me about the war bonds everyone bought in World War II. Some, in a sense of patriotism, never even cashed them, they were so proud to be a part of such a noble effort.

*Congress needs to establish a **National Disaster Recovery Bond** giving Americans a structured way to express their generosity beyond writing a check to the charity of their choice.*

The billions of dollars generated could be used to retire home mortgages and business debt for which collateral no longer exists. This preserves the integrity of our financial institutions, prevents defaults and credit debacle. The refinanced rebuilding spurs the local economy. Refinancing packages could carry a small monthly fee or premium to pay interest to bond-holders. It takes vision and leadership to use a national disaster to call on all Americans to invest in rebuilding better than before so America's enemies will not perceive us as weak and ineffectual. A **National Disaster Recovery Bond** could be used for any natural or man-made disaster and would be part of America's first line of defense and national security.

- Third, both political parties and our President have voiced belief in America as an ownership society. *Using the Gulf Zone area (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida) to model a true Homeownership Tax Credit would incentivize investment in the re-building of so many lost homes.* Congress and the President need to seize this unique opportunity.

Finally, SMHA wants you to know that over 5 months later our organization is often the first and only responder helping rural Louisiana clean out, de-construct and begin reconstruction. Without the quick and un-bureaucratic help from national foundations such as W.K. Kellogg, F.B. Heron, Mary Reynolds Babcock, Jesse Smith Noyes, Fannie Mae, MacArthur, Needmore, Flora, Associated Black Charities, community trusts such as N.Y. Community Trust, partners such as Oxfam America, the Union for Reformed Judaism, Farm Aid and intermediaries such as Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation and volunteers from colleges and universities such as Colgate, Berea, Warren Wilson, and church groups such as The Mennonite Disaster Service, The Amish, Unitarians, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholic congregations of religious women such as the Sisters of Providence, the Volunteers of America and the rural network of CDC's especially that led by Jim Upchurch, and the many generous individuals across America who contributed—none of SMHA's

Rural Recovery Response would have been possible. With their help SMHA has 150 homes and businesses repaired or in process of repair. There are tens of thousands of homes, facilities and businesses left to repair or rebuild. We count on your leadership and policy for a full recovery.

To learn more about Southern Mutual Help and the Rural Recovery Response, please go to www.SouthernMutualHelp.org.

Ms. FRANKLIN. One of the things that I would like to say is that the faith-based organizations played a key role in the work that we were doing in that the churches act as shelters; we act as a clearinghouse making referrals to the churches. But all of the churches beyond denominations stepped up to the plate to make sure that the community-based groups and the churches worked together. All together in our community, we served 5,100 households that came through our network and through our databank. But through the CSBG Unit, and through the other community-based organizations, and through the faith-based groups, that is how we were able to successfully do the work that we did.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Hazelwood.

**TOM HAZELWOOD, UNITED METHODIST COMMITTEE ON
RELIEF**

Mr. HAZELWOOD. I want to say a word of thanks, I think, in some ways, for all of the criticism that has been out there toward FEMA and that seems to be very abundant.

One thing I want to say is that the FEMA people that we work with on the ground, in the States, down in the areas where they are affected are most effective, and they do a wonderful job, particularly as the Voluntary Agency Liaisons who have spent years building these relationships, who knew each of us, have done a good job of helping us coordinate in our response.

So I want to say that all is not negative that we hear about that.

One of the other thing that I want to bring to your attention that I did not write in my statement was that as people were being sheltered—in particular I am thinking about in Texas, the Katrina victims that were in Houston and actually, all over the State of Texas—the Red Cross shelters were overwhelmed and many of the others, so that many of our churches opened their doors as shelters. And one of the things that happened for us as we opened shelters was that we found that we were housing persons with disabilities. I think there has been a woeful lack of preparedness in being able to handle persons with disabilities. As we have worked into the future on the response, we are working with the National Disabilities Rights Network to build those relationships.

But I think that remembering persons with disabilities also needs to be thought about as we are thinking about sheltering and moving people.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hazelwood follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOM HAZELWOOD

In the days immediately following Hurricane Katrina, UMCOR sent staff and consultants to Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Our purpose was to connect the national response agency to the local United Methodist response as well as Federal and State responses. Contacts were made with local disaster response coordinators, judiciary leaders, FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons, and local response agencies.

Daily calls hosted by National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) enabled UMCOR to know and coordinate ongoing activities with those of

other response agencies. Separate calls hosted by Church World Service (CWS) enabled the faith-based organizations to coordinate their response. These calls were particularly helpful in the distribution of material resources.

Within a few days, UMCOR placed persons in the FEMA Joint Field Offices (JFO) in MS and LA. These persons were engaged in the ongoing meetings and dialogue between Federal, State and local response organizations/agencies.

In the MS JFO, UMCOR was also participating in meetings of the Joint Housing Command, where solutions for the many displaced families were being discussed.

Because of UMCOR's experience in setting up and running refugee camps internationally and providing case management leadership and training in the United States, we were asked by the FEMA staff in the JFO to write a proposal for work in MS.

It has been evident from the earliest part of the response to Katrina and then Rita that while the FEMA staff on the ground are very well aware of the work of voluntary agencies and the tremendous resources they bring to response, the FEMA staff at the highest levels have no understanding or appreciation of the voluntary sector.

It was at the urging of the long-time FEMA employees that UMCOR changed its proposal from only serving MS to one presented in conjunction with National VOAD for a consortium of case management agencies to be formed to work on a national scale. The lack of understanding at the highest levels was made evident by the repeated number of conference calls, answering questions, writing papers all to explain over and over what disaster case management is.

The lack of awareness extended to other Government Agencies. The offices of faith based and community initiatives in the Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development and the Veterans Administration began dialogue with the White House's Office of Faith Based Initiatives and developed a plan using refugee resettlement as its frame of reference. When members of the National VOAD tried to make these two entities aware of the already existing faith-based disaster programs, there was little to no willingness to even invite those disaster organizations to be in the conversation. I personally could not get an invitation to attend the meetings even after pointedly asking to attend.

After UMCOR/National VOAD had been awarded a \$66 million grant to provide long-term disaster case management for individuals and families affected by Hurricane Katrina, the leadership of FEMA continued to miscommunicate the intended result of the grant by sending notices that the grant would solve the Katrina hotel housing crises that FEMA was facing.

I was in the FEMA offices in Washington, D.C. dozens of times in the weeks and months following Hurricane Katrina. Several times I either tried or made appointments to see FEMA Recovery Director David Garratt and FEMA Director David Paulison in order to discuss UMCOR's long-term recovery case management plans specifically and the involvement of voluntary agencies generally. Each time I would either be shuffled off to someone else or brushed off due to "lack of time."

Finally after meeting with FEMA staff in the Recovery Division a meeting with Garratt and Paulison was scheduled for Feb. 9, 2006. When the National VOAD leadership arrived for the meeting, Dave Garratt met us with the apology that another meeting had come up and he would not be able to participate in our meeting. As we met with Paulison, he made clear his lack of knowledge of the voluntary agencies by repeatedly telling the group that they needed to "step up to the plate."

The lack of consideration by Garratt to attend and the utter lack of preparation or care by Paulison in the meeting with National VOAD leadership gives a clear indication of the disconnect between the leadership at FEMA and the people, and organizations on the ground that provide relief in disasters.

An article published on Feb. 27, 2006 by The Washington Post reports that the voluntary sector has raised over \$3.27 billion. Of that, over \$2 billion has already been disbursed. It is clear that the voluntary sector has "stepped up to the plate."

Observations on What Can Be Done to Better Coordinate Relief and Reconstruction Efforts

- Faith-based and voluntary organizations have expended a great deal of effort to build relationships with each other before disasters occur. Federal and State officials could learn from the voluntary sector that in the midst of a disaster is not the time to build relationships.

- Better relationships between top levels at FEMA and FEMA on the ground would keep help voluntary agencies from bearing the brunt of this disconnect. A "firewall" between the political appointees and the government employees who are charged with implementing the policies and programs would help keep continuity

in disaster response rather than have response policies constantly fall prey to new political trends.

- There must be some understanding with regard to disaster response between Government Agencies. So often two separate agencies will be attempting to solve the same problem while being isolated from each other.

Preparation for 2006 Hurricane Season

- Meeting with jurisdictions affected by the 2005 hurricanes to evaluate lessons learned.
- Ongoing training with coastal jurisdictions to prepare for disasters. (For example, we have training scheduled on April 24–26 for our Southeastern States.)
- Restocking material resources.
- Meeting with Volunteers in Mission leadership to refine deployment strategies for individual volunteers as well as response teams.
- As a form of mitigation, United Methodist case managers working with Katrina/Rita clients are addressing concerns related to the upcoming 2006 season on a case-by-case basis.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gaddy.

REVEREND DR. WELTON GADDY, PRESIDENT, INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

Mr. GADDY. Thank you, Senator Enzi.

I want to affirm what Ms. Franklin said about the importance of faith-based organizations in the delivery of services in a region and explain a little bit why it could be that way.

I think that faith-based organizations move with quickness and with flexibility and with spontaneity that enhance the delivery of services in a crisis like this.

One caution I have about strict coordination relates to those strengths. I do not want us to add a layer of government coordination to faith-based organizations that in the end compromises the very strengths that allow faith-based organizations to do their work.

We were talking beforehand—I find sometimes that the people strategizing about how to meet disaster needs do not really understand faith-based structures and the way they do business, and this impacts both the delivery of services and funding related to services.

One reason that faith-based organizations are there on the ground is because they are not doing this because of the special moment—they are doing it because of an enduring compassion. This is what faith-based organizations do. You can count on them being there because it is a part of our makeup. So we are not there to be guided by what someone else wants done. We are there out of our own unique faith traditions that need to have the freedom to find expression, and that means that we need good communication, a minimal level of coordination, and a respect for the importance of sharing whatever our religious tradition is as we do the work of compassion.

[The prepared statement of Rev. Dr. Gaddy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. DR. C. WELTON GADDY

Chairman Enzi, Ranking Member Kennedy, Senators and staff of the committee, thank you for allowing The Interfaith Alliance this opportunity to share with you our experiences with regards to the role of faith based organizations in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

A mixture of anger, compassion, appreciation, and anxiety has motivated my daily actions in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As the pastor of a church in Monroe, Lou-

isiana, I have been privileged to work alongside members of my congregation and other members of our community in a variety of relief efforts involving spiritual, logistical, and financial issues. The personal and religious compassion that I have witnessed have, at times, been overwhelming. Such has not been the case, as you know, with governmental responses to screaming needs.

In response to the compassion of the religious community—and the failures of our Government—on October 21, 2005, The Interfaith Alliance led an unprecedented interfaith delegation of religious leaders to Baton Rouge. This delegation met with Katrina evacuees and the many religious leaders and community, local and State agencies providing relief efforts to all those adversely affected.

We felt it of the utmost importance that this delegation spend its day listening to the evacuees and their caregivers. We needed to hear their heroic stories. We needed them to tell us what their needs were, be it spiritual, emotional, financial or all of the above. This delegation was less about who we are and what we do for a living, but rather more about our fellow brothers and sisters in need and our abilities to make a positive difference.

Upon our return to Washington, The Interfaith Alliance compiled a written and video report of our trip. The report we wrote was not the report we anticipated. Because our organizational focus is on the protection of people's religious and civil liberties, our lens with which to see Baton Rouge was focused in this direction. But what we saw and heard were the personal stories of the people from this region—personal stories laced with important insights into the gross tardiness of governmental officials, the stark failure of Government Agencies, the repulsive ugliness of a rampant racism that knows no socio-economic boundaries and which, if left unresolved, in the long run, will prove more destructive than the onslaught of a cluster of Category 5 hurricanes. These stories also abound with references to heroic efforts on the part of people of faith, compassion, and goodwill who have demonstrated a level of generosity without which the region today would be devoid of most of the most helpful efforts of the past several months.

This report is a collection of what The Interfaith Alliance saw, felt, heard, touched, and thought during its visit to Baton Rouge, 56 days after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast region.

While thousands of people's lives were impacted in the area, this report only deals with the current situation in Baton Rouge.

If there is one visual that best describes in our minds what Baton Rouge "looks" like spiritually and emotionally, it would be one big mess. And without the selfless acts of community groups, local elected officials and especially the religious community, it is impossible to describe where the city and its new population of almost 500,000 would be today.

The Cause

The Government clearly failed in its preparation and response to the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina. In doing so, the weakest and poorest among us have suffered greatly.

The Effects—What We Saw and Heard

The Interfaith Alliance respects and praises the important role that religious groups have played in providing assistance to those in need. They responded—as they should—both compassionately and charitably to people in need and expected no Government money for support. Why? Because this is what they do.

When the religious community reacted to the hurt inflicted not only by the hurricane, but by the Government, did they realize the full impact on themselves? Did they realize that they would cut their daycare programs and after school-programs just to make physical space for a food bank and clothing distribution center? Did they realize they would not be able to pay their light bill because they were too concerned with helping elderly evacuees pay for their diabetes medication? Did they realize they could be caring for and possibly housing evacuees for up to 3 years? Did they realize they would open up for business and take in 50 residents?

In the months, days, hours and minutes following Hurricane Katrina, numerous and diverse religious communities rose to the occasion and offered help, ranging from serving up meals to tired rescue workers to offering solace to the elderly man who had just lost his wife to the raging waters of a levee break. But did they, or could they understand just how much undue responsibility they were assuming in acting on their compassion? Did they realize this would be a commitment of up to 3 years? Would it have mattered?

From what we saw and heard, the local religious community of Baton Rouge is stretched beyond its breaking point, both financially and spiritually. Houses of wor-

ship and religious organizations are trained to minister to the sick, hungry and poor. But they are not trained, nor should they be, FEMA's replacement. Because many Government leaders reacted so poorly, the religious community—among many other community groups—has been left holding an empty bag with no relief in sight.

I speak only about what I have seen, felt, heard, touched, and thought.

I hear the complaints of a man imprisoned by stereotypes—a gentleman in the first of the trailer cities to go online in Baton Rouge, a man who is crippled in efforts to find employment because of the outrageous assumption that anyone living in one of these—what the people of Louisiana are calling “FEMA ghettos”—must be impoverished, lazy, and incapable of meaningful work.

I feel the nausea evoked by public officials in New Orleans speaking with disdain about the people of color whom they need to help and expressing in whispers their wish that they simply could eliminate these people from the scene.

In the trailer village in Baker, LA, wading in dust as deep as snow after a major winter storm, I heard people talk of their difficulties with breathing and seeing. I am haunted by the outburst of a young woman reflecting on the question “What do you need?” “What do I need?” she asked rhetorically. “What do I need?” How about my toe nail clippers? How about my curling iron? Do you know what it is like to have nothing—nothing and no way to get anything?

I saw Mayors stretched to their limits in efforts to help the new citizens of their cities who bring to their new homes only hurt, needs, and a desire for a new life. And, I hear these Mayors speak of no financial help from FEMA.

I listen and watch basic State institutions in Louisiana making plans to close because of a lack of funding in the wake of the Federal Government's refusal to provide adequate assistance for a State to function as a State.

I watch with gratitude and amazement scores of religious communities that continue to provide shelters and programs for evacuees with little idea of where the money will come from to pay the costs involved and, because they have not been on the photo-ops tours of public officials, they are receiving no aid from even the Red Cross.

But, let's get this straight. Religious leaders and their congregations provide help in a time of crisis because that is what we do. We do not wait on the President or a Governor to call us to action. The compulsion comes from our convictions. The hurt is our call to service.

Personally, I am offended as well as astounded by people, who under the guise of religion, now request Federal financial hand-outs—a request inspired by a President who has promised money to houses of worship that cannot be delivered—to cover the costs of budget deficits that were on their books long before there was even a tidal wave that started swirling its way into a hurricane.

I am weary of listening to Government officials patronizing religious people with comments about the importance of our work in this disaster. It is time for these officials to get busy doing their work—providing for the public welfare, which is a moral responsibility of Government.

I am worried as I watch the manipulation of catastrophic hurt in the interest of advancing legislative initiatives for which the Government has not been able to secure public affirmation or congressional approval in normal times. The policies at the center of my concern may provide a pittance of money immediately, but, ultimately, these policies will result in a diminished guarantee of civil rights and a compromise of religious liberty. We can do better!

Were it not for the initiative and generosity of many social agencies and religious groups, the Gulf Coast region would be in even more terrible trouble than is presently the case. But let us not blame the Government. We are the Government. Let us blame those whom we have employed to do the essential work of Government that is not being done. Let us demand that they do better or get out of the way and allow someone else a chance to lead by helping people in need.

Recommendations

Religions in this Nation recognize that the Federal Government can be of immense help in relieving the suffering that they address every day and encourage Government officials to act to make this relief a reality. These recommendations lend themselves to the Government acting in a way the American people expect them to:

- We need tax incentives for charitable giving and tax relief for the poor in our land who are carrying a part of the burden created by tax relief for the wealthy.
- We need a commitment to public education and funding for public education that assure every student quality preparation for exiting poverty through the doorway of meaningful employment.

- We need an interest in welfare that does not adjust the welfare rolls to cut funding but provides people with the training and support they need to outgrow the welfare rolls.
- Real compassion should be evident in every line item in the Federal budget, not just at those places intended to promote the Government's funding of religion.
- We need a partnership between religious institutions, the Federal Government and private philanthropy that draws upon their collective resources and protects the integrity of all.

What Does "Better Coordination" Mean?

Because so much attention has been given to the tremendous role that faith-based groups played during this crisis, a lot of talk has been around making permanent, the President's White House Office of Community and Faith Based Initiatives. The Faith Based Initiative is an example of manipulation, not coordination.

Neither in a time of crisis nor in normal times do we need a faith-based office in the White House. We have faith-based offices all over this Nation and they are where they belong—in synagogues and gurdwaras, in mosques and churches, in temples and store-front ministry centers.

Religion should not be dictated from the White House or legislated from the halls of Congress; this is not where religion works. Religion thrives on freedom, not on imposition. Even the most avid evangelists know that religion can never be pushed down a person's throat. The result is not authentic religion.

The term "coordination" in and of itself is a legal term that connotes expectations as well as entanglement. Governmental leaders must communicate their programs and priorities with religious groups and other non-profit organizations in order to enhance the work of all. The religious community accepts the appreciation expressed by President Bush for the hard work in the aftermath of Katrina, but the greatest show of thanks would be for the Federal Government to now step up and do its job. Regular communications and mutual awareness is absolutely necessary. But at the end of the day, only the Federal Government can provide assistance to current and future evacuees on the scale and size of a problem as large as Hurricane Katrina.

Katrina has taught us many lessons in the past 6 months. For The Interfaith Alliance, the lesson most amplified is that the Government must act like the Government and respond helpfully to the weakest and poorest among us. And the religious community will continue to act like the religious community in responding compassionately and charitably to people in need.

A Report From the Field—Gautier, MS

As The Interfaith Alliance's delegation departed Baton Rouge 56 days after Katrina came ashore, a promise was made by the delegation that we would find ways in which to share the stories and experiences of those we met. Rabbi David Gelfand, a member of the delegation, shared his experiences with local religious leaders in East Hampton, NY. In return, one of the Rabbi's colleagues went to Mississippi to offer his help and reported back to his congregation his experiences. We share this with the members of this committee because it is important to always keep in front of us what is most important:

Eleven of us from the East Hampton Church returned last night from a week's stay in Gautier (pronounced Go-ché), Mississippi. We were part of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance team which has been on the ground since September, helping people put their lives and homes back together. It was a remarkable experience for all of us on this team.

With a wide variety of skills (or in my case non skills) we were assigned varying ranges of tasks, from cooking, to office management, to roofing. Together, we shingled and insulated one home for a woman with disabilities who has been living in Memphis since the storm, and mucked out (taking the debris, wall-board, rugs—everything—out of the house); repaired poorly constructed boards, insulated and wall boarded another home. In the meantime, we erected the camp tent, did camp clean up duties, and purchased supplies for the work teams that would follow us. (There were three others in camp when we left yesterday.) We had a great sense of accomplishment as we saw tasks being completed.

But our work is such a small imprint on an overwhelming canvas. The devastation is beyond description and beyond belief. As we drove toward the coast from the Airport in Jackson, we began to point out trees that had fallen, neon signs that had been blown away in Hattiesburg, some 60 miles away. Throughout the week we would see little pockets of the damage; homes with blue tarped roofs, FEMA trailers on the front yards, and debris piled in near the curb. But as we left yesterday, we drove along Highway 90 along the coast in Biloxi and Gulfport, and we began to see the enormous task that lies ahead. Blocks and blocks

are still waiting for the rubble to be removed. There are areas that look like they have been bombed. Businesses are gone—there is the foundation, but nothing else. These are most likely mom and pop variety of stores that populate beach communities, and there is little chance that they will come back. There is construction being done on the casinos in Biloxi—one is already open for business—and some of the larger hotels and homes, but everything else is piecemeal. There is no economy outside of the service industries—the fast food chains are up and running and feeding the construction workers—and Lowes, Home Depot and WalMart were running at full-speed. Workers are hard to find for these establishments, they advertise \$7.00 an hour wages, but there is no place for people to live.

The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance will be onsite for 2 to 3 years. Groups are strongly encouraged to plan work camps and mission trips; there is so much work to do. We are thankful for the nearly \$5,000 that was raised in the East Hampton Community for this trip. We will be offering a report in worship on March 12, and at other opportunities as they develop.

One final word of encouragement. On Sunday we worshiped at the Gautier Presbyterian Church, a small church with about 70 members. The church sustained some damage as did many of its members. But we were all struck by the powerful spirit of hope that was present in worship that morning. There were several visiting groups to join the congregation in worship. Every seat was taken (and they were new, of course, since the old pews were found floating in a couple feet of water when the doors were opened after the storm.) They sang with enthusiasm along with the new piano, hymnal and bibles. In the service there was a service of ordination and installation of one elder, and when the call came out for all elders to come forward, there were people representing churches from South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Virginia, Ohio, New York and other States, forming again, an unbreakable bond of the Body of Christ.” Kent Winters-Hazelton, Interim Pastor, First Presbyterian Church East Hampton, NY.

Thank you for allowing The Interfaith Alliance this opportunity to address the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Nemitz.

CRAIG NEMITZ, DISASTER SERVICES MANAGER, AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST

Mr. NEMITZ. Thank you again for convening this roundtable.

I want to echo a couple of things. The first is Mr. Hazelwood's recognition of FEMA for the good work they did. I would also like to recognize the Public-Private Partnership Office of DHS, which also helped my organization, America's Second Harvest, get a lot of work done that we could not have gotten done without their help and without FEMA's help.

The Voluntary Agency Liaisons that Mr. Hazelwood mentioned are vital, and in my written testimony, I would request, ask, beg, that they be permanent employees, that they not be left to every 2 years having to reapply for their jobs. They are a great group of people who know disaster response from the ground up.

Along those same lines, though, during the time of the disaster is not when we should be exchanging business cards with each other, be it faith-based, community-based, or otherwise. The Emergency Management Institute at Emmitsburg, MD needs to be better-funded. That was a training ground for many of us to cut our teeth on when we first got involved, and I think a lot of us would benefit from that facility having proper funding to allow small organizations, large organizations, new employees at the State and local levels of government, to go and get disaster management basics under their belts.

A lot of what we did this year had to be built on the fly—and I speak only for my organization, because I am sure that everybody

else's plans worked perfectly. But a lot of what we had to do, we did with the best of intentions, with the best of support, and let us take away the lessons we learned from this to make sure that the mistakes we have made before are not made again.

I see the clock is running. I came across a quote yesterday that I just had to share with this group. We are seeing all these final reports coming out from various organizations—the final report from the White House, the final report from lessons learned, information sharing. I did not realize there were so many final reports. But this quote is credited to Eleanor Roosevelt, who once said, “Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; and small minds discuss people.” I hope we are going to be with the great minds as we put together our lessons learned from this.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nemitz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CRAIG NEMITZ

Dear Chairman Enzi and Senator Kennedy, thank you very much for your invitation to participate in a roundtable discussion focusing on the contribution of community-based organizations to the relief and reconstruction effort on the Gulf Coast. I look forward to the opportunity to describe my experiences and offer my thoughts and suggestions.

Background

The destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, followed closely by Hurricane Rita, is unlike anything this country has seen. Amid the devastation, however, came an unprecedented outpouring of assistance from many levels. America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network, the Nation's largest hunger-relief charity, was there to supply the basic necessities: food and water. With more than 200 food banks and food-rescue organizations serving all 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, which in turn serve more than 50,000 charitable agencies, the America's Second Harvest Network provides emergency food assistance to approximately 25 million Americans each year. Because the America's Second Harvest Network is so expansive and experienced, when disaster strikes, we are ready to respond quickly and efficiently.

Our Disaster Experience

America's Second Harvest has been an active member of National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) for many years. Our Vice-President of Programs (Christopher Rebstock) served as NVOAD's President and I currently am a member of the board of directors.

This involvement is not by happenstance; we long ago realized that the strength of one organization is complimented by the collective strength of many. America's Second Harvest values our partnerships pre- and post-disaster as this is how our network of food banks function to lessen hunger in the United States everyday.

America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network has a long standing Statement of Understanding with the American Red Cross and on August 9, 2005 we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Emergency Management Agency/Department of Homeland Security; never anticipating that just 19 days later the largest natural disaster in U.S. history would begin. These are two examples of formalized relationships we have but dozens more informally exist as a matter of course. I would be remiss, however, if I did not specifically mention the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA. Federal commodities are critical to food bank operations, whether in disaster mode or not. America's Second Harvest is very fortunate to have an excellent relationship with USDA and that relationship allowed for a very smooth transition to an emergency mode of operations during the disaster. With the USDA's commitment to meeting emergency needs during the hurricanes and their aftermath, commodity deliveries to food banks were quick and effective. While food banks in the affected areas did a tremendous job meeting immediate need, emergency food stamps issued by the USDA helped address more ongoing need.

Our food banks in the Gulf States and nationwide work daily to distribute donated food and grocery items to local charities that serve people in need. These efforts doubled and redoubled after Katrina struck. Hundreds of local agencies ceased to exist post-storm and dozens of new agencies sprung into action to help people af-

ected by the destruction. Local groups that had a NVOAD or State VOAD connection were the easiest routes to channel disaster response products towards. Other groups needed to be quickly educated on the standards set by America's Second Harvest before they could safely and efficiently access food from a local food bank. This procedure was time consuming but food bankers are flexible people that streamlined processes in order to expeditiously get food to the affected areas.

Knowing that the hurricanes had significantly altered the landscape of the Network as well as the face of demand for food assistance, America's Second Harvest has sought to quantify such changes. Last November, America's Second Harvest devised a plan to interview clients in food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters to learn more about the circumstances that led them to seek emergency food assistance and better understand their needs, and to survey provider agencies and food bank representatives to assess how the hurricanes affected service delivery. The end result was an assessment of the impact of Katrina and Rita on charitable food assistance delivery that will enable the America's Second Harvest Network to be even more effective in responding to future disasters. I would like to share some of the results of that study with you.

Clients

- Demands for food assistance overall in the Gulf Coast States are 50 percent above pre-Katrina levels.
- 72 percent of clients seeking food assistance in the impacted States were first time clients, tripling the demands in the impacted States as a result of the hurricanes.
- One in nine households representing 6.4 million people in the impacted States received food assistance.
- Nearly 40 percent of the households requesting food assistance were African-American.
- 31 percent of households requesting food assistance had a child 12 years of age or younger.
- Households seeking emergency food assistance had median incomes of \$26,000 compared to \$42,000 for the total area; 21 percent report having an income below \$10,000—more than twice the percentage found throughout the area.
- 28 percent of the people seeking emergency food assistance immediately after Katrina were already receiving food assistance before the hurricane hit.
- 77 percent of the new food recipients no longer needed assistance following the “peak” period in October. Of the people still requesting food assistance, 65 percent were already receiving food assistance prior to Katrina.

Food Banks Respond

- America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network provided an unprecedented response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma with more than 1,600 truckloads carrying 62 million pounds of food providing approximately 48 million meals valued at an estimated \$84 million.
- 39 of 210 (13 percent) of America's Second Harvest Members are located in the impacted States.
- Two food banks in the primary markets reported a three-fold increase in food distribution since Katrina. The Bay Area Food Bank in Mobile, AL reported a ten-fold increase at the peak of the relief effort, tapering off to 75 percent now.
- Secondary markets reported an average of 60 percent increase in food distribution.

Agency Infrastructure

- 41 percent of the people receiving food assistance prior to Katrina report that the agency where they received assistance is no longer in operation.
- The primary markets reported 86 percent of their agencies currently being served were temporary disaster-relief programs.
- 80 percent of clients receiving food assistance prior to Katrina reported food availability being the same or better following Katrina.

Issues to Consider

Local Emergency Management and City Government officials would be wise to include the non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and State VOAD members in ALL exercises, drills and planning meetings. The time to exchange business cards and decide who has what skills and abilities is not after a disaster strikes. NGO's must be included in all pre-event planning and in the mitigation process in order to be effective. Government officials at all levels must broaden their definition of “first responders” beyond police officers and fire fighters. NGO's are first responders by design but are somewhat neglected in the emergency management cycle.

On the State level, Emergency Operation Centers coast-to-coast must have a seat for their State VOAD representatives. This not only puts the collective abilities of the NGO's at the Governor's doorstep but it also opens up resources for the charities to access in order to get their jobs done. Each State needs to also include NGO's at all stations of their planning.

For the Federal side of this equation, the issues get much more convoluted. The single greatest asset that NGO's have in the disaster arena is the FEMA VAL's (Voluntary Agency Liaisons). This core of 12 seasoned FEMA employees and their liaison at FEMA's Response and Recovery Directorate in Washington, D.C., gives a vital lifeline between the decisions made in Washington and the NGO's actually doing the job on the ground. The VAL's helped America's Second Harvest access scarce fuel, permits and other resources in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama when no answers were forthcoming from State EOC offices. The VAL's need to be made permanent, core positions in the FEMA structure.

The Public Private Partnership Office of the Department of Homeland Security was an outstanding resource in countless ways during the response in the Gulf. This office helped America's Second Harvest secure much needed warehouse space for disaster supplies in Louisiana and helped to secure lodging for food bank responders. The DHS oversight of FEMA adds a layer to the communications channels but fortunately my office knew who to call at the right time for the right answers. This was by design but occasionally good fortune smiled upon us.

During the 2005 hurricane season there were occasions when State and Federal entities were competing with non-profit organizations for financial contributions. Governors were setting up relief funds and the Clinton-Bush Fund was also appealing for support. These admirable efforts take away desperately needed sources from community groups, faith based organizations, NGO's and VOAD members. Time and effort then needs to be expended applying to the big funds so charities can continue their jobs. A corporate CEO is not going to say "no" when a former President of the United States knocks on his door or when the Governor calls, but that diminishes the timely support available to non-profits. There are only so many slices in the charitable pie.

Another tidbit for the Federal issue is for FEMA/DHS to fully and eternally fund the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, MD. This world class facility was where all newcomers to disaster management went to cut their teeth on critical issues like donations management, incident command and unaffiliated volunteers. EMI gave everyone (Governmental and NGO's) a common basis of knowledge and usable training to take into the field. The EMI VAL position was eliminated due to budget cuts and restructuring a few years ago; this critical position needs to be re-established and supported.

Based on my experience, it is only the military that would have had the ability to handle the affects of hurricane Katrina alone. This brings to mind an area where your influence would be extremely valuable at the local, county and State levels. In Mississippi our food banks worked closely with the Mississippi National Guard—this marriage of resources made perfect sense, we had the food they had the trucks and personnel to get into areas cut off from normal distribution channels. In Texas after hurricane Rita it was a completely different story. The Texas National Guard was ordered not to transport any relief supplies on their vehicles if those supplies came from a non-profit organization.

Any assistance that you can offer to help NGO's standardize relationships with National Guard Command from state to state would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, I submit to you that NGO's, VOAD members, faith-based organizations and community groups would be best served at all levels of Government if the playing field was level. For example; low interest disaster mitigation loans are available to for-profit small business owners to reinforce a roof or install a generator for back up power through the Small Business Administration. However, non-profit organizations like the 213 food banks in the America's Second Harvest Network are not even allowed to apply for these types of urgently needed loans. This disparity becomes even more confusing because non-profits can apply to the SBA to rebuild after their facilities are destroyed. The logic is not bubbling to the surface here.

Food banks, some houses of worship and other non-profit buildings are distributing relief supplies hours and often days before State and Federal resources can access hard hit communities after a disaster. Shouldn't these valuable organizations at least have access to funds that can help them do better during the worst of times?

In preparation for the upcoming 2006 hurricane season (as well as whatever else Mother Nature throws at us) America's Second Harvest has recently conducted a Disaster Debrief Conference in Chicago for those food banks that were primarily affected and secondarily supported the relief efforts from Katrina & Rita & Wilma.

We are collecting and deciphering our internal lessons learned in order to strengthen our ability to respond when a disaster strikes. Our Network and those agencies we worked with did a tremendous amount of good to alleviate suffering this past year—but we know that as local and State Emergency Management offices and DHS focuses and invests more on terrorism issues, the natural disaster response and long term recovery will fall more and more onto the shoulders of the community based organizations.

Again I want to express my appreciation for your invitation to take part in this discussion and I hope that our meeting will be the first of many that will help us all learn where the shortcomings could have been avoided and to also celebrate the chance to duplicate the successes when things worked well.

Respectfully submitted,

CRAIG A NEMITZ, CEM,
Disaster Services Manager,

America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. BOURG. Well, in deference to my colleagues who made rather kind statements about FEMA, I seriously, strenuously, vociferously disagree. Our experience in rural Louisiana with FEMA has been a disaster, and no one has the authority to say or do anything, and they frequently and regularly contradict each other. I am not talking about the people who try to work hard and are out there, but the fact is there is something seriously wrong with the structure of FEMA, especially in regard to rural areas—at least, that is my experience in rural Louisiana.

I do recommend in my comments the restructuring of FEMA and how to do that a little bit, and I guess I would like to pay a little more attention to something called the National Disaster Recovery Bond, which has kind of taken something from my own grandmother, who remembers World War II and how we won the war and rebuilt Europe, and Americans were looking for a way to be part of that victory. I think Americans would like to do more than, hopefully, write checks to the Red Cross. The National Disaster Recovery Bond could not only be used from Texas to Florida right now, but could be used in any national disaster anywhere, and people would buy those bonds. That would help retire the debt on mortgages and businesses, and when they refinance, a small premium could be paid in order to pay, let us say, 3 percent on the bond. I think Americans would put that as part of their investment portfolio.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Wright.

JAYNE WRIGHT, DIRECTOR, LOUISIANA STATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER AND HEAD OF THE FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL LOUISIANA

Ms. WRIGHT. I have a couple things to say. First of all, I want to echo the comments about what worked and about relationship-building before a storm happens. The networks that we build in communities, in VOAD meetings, and knowing who is going to be on the other end of the phone when the call does actually go through are very important, and knowing what the other partner is going to do as far as the food is going to be there, the shelter is going to be there, the one phone call request are the best kind during the chaos; and knowing that in many cases, the way we

work together, your word is your bond. And that is kind of old-fashioned these days, but that is the way this community works.

Communication, of course, was a tremendous challenge from day one, and when all the systems went down, a lot of the communication eventually happened face-to-face, because people are having to drive in. I was in the stadium for months, and slept on a cot in the back, so I had the experience of sheltering as well—when I did sleep.

I also want to echo some of the comments about FEMA and the State operations people. Those were my primary contacts in the initial days, and then the FEMA VALs, the Voluntary Agency Liaisons. They were very responsive to our requests. We requested equipment and help finding different resources during the storms, and they might tell me “No,” but when I came back, they had reconsidered, so they were very open to the discussion.

A lot of the things that happened with FEMA from my perspective is that a lot of the rules kept changing with the people on the ground. That is one reason that there was a lot of confusion, because they started off operating under one set of parameters, but it changed during the whole thing, and it kept changing. That is the reason why a lot of times, you would get “Yes” one time and “No” the next time—the ball kept moving.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wright follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAYNE WRIGHT

Senators Enzi and Kennedy, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion about the response of the Voluntary Agencies to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is difficult to capture everything in a few minutes. There are so many things that happened with this response, more good than bad. However, that is not the picture that many choose to paint.

The majority of my time was spent in the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC), in Baton Rouge prior to the landfall of Katrina until mid-October. My responsibilities as the President/Chair of Louisiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (LAVOAD), were to represent the group in the EOC, (handling requests from the parish governments, other State agencies, State officials, voluntary organizations, assist in the implementation of the donation management plan, coordinate the flow of donated goods and volunteers until the donations coordination team was in place), and facilitate the weekly meetings of the LAVOAD groups.

In addition, to the aforementioned duties, my volunteer job, I am also the Executive Director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana, my day job. We are a member of America's Second Harvest, the Nation's Food Bank Network. I serve on the National Council of the group.

My Food Bank is located in shelter sector A, the initial area for evacuees to be sheltered within the State. Our job is to supply the shelters during the time that they are open, whether they are part of the Red Cross system or not. During these storms, we supplied food to 49 groups that were not part of the Food Bank network or the Red Cross network. In addition, our team provided food to more than 12,000 families that were staying in private homes or hotels/motels.

During the height of the chaos, communication was difficult at best. The only system that did not go down was the blackberry and I did not have one, most volunteers did not. Eventually the land lines, e-mail and cell phones came back, but in those first couple of weeks we had to send volunteers out to areas where we could not reach the local Office of Emergency Preparedness. They reported back and we sent supplies accordingly. The parishes that were able to communicate sent requests as did State agencies at an unbelievable pace. We responded and sent volunteers and supplies all across the State. Fortunately, the food banks had a good stock on hand, the Southern Baptist travel with initial stock, so, we had access to food immediately.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service was on site within a few days to offer more food. Of course, the food in the schools is made available to those shelter operations, but so many shelters were located in places that had never served as shelters be-

fore. There was a much greater need for congregate feeding and household distribution.

America's Second Harvest, the Nation's Food Bank Network (A2H), responded with unprecedented support from other food banks, food donors, and trained volunteers. Food and grocery products were flowing into staging warehouses and the local food banks very quickly.

Adventist Community Services came in to operate the one of two multi-agency warehouses that we set up in New Iberia; A2H ran the other in Baker. Donated goods were shipped to these locations in addition to the four remaining food banks in Louisiana. Community based organizations, both VOAD and non VOAD, and local governments, including first responders, accessed the supplies from these points.

An example of this type of situation was during Hurricane Rita, one rural parish OEP sent in a request for food for 6,000 people that had evacuated to Sabine Parish. We responded by forwarding the request to the nearest food bank and that team delivered food to them within a few hours.

LAVOAD responded to requests for supplies and resources within our own network as well, coordinating shipments of supplies to warehouses and agencies as needed. We worked beside the American Red Cross team in the EOC and helped whenever they had a request for assistance. We were able to work with the American Red Cross to get services into parishes in Southwest Louisiana where there had been little service or communication with the Voluntary Agencies before.

We also worked closely with the State Department of Social Services to provide supplies to the shelters that they were coordinating. Many baby products, toiletries, blankets, food and other supplies were delivered to their sites across the State.

As the storms quieted, and the efforts to place people into transitional housing progressed, the LAVOAD team stepped forward to take donated goods and put "living kits" together. These kits contained basic household goods and linens that were placed in the trailers at the FEMA staging site in Baton Rouge.

There are many more examples of team work between the Voluntary Organizations, local and State government, and community based organizations. We are not without challenges. Communication is probably the biggest, followed by education of the government agencies with regard to their responsibilities in the State plan, education of government at all levels with regard to VOAD and logistics. Logistics are always a challenge in this type of situation.

Both the efforts of the LAVOAD team and the Food Bank are ongoing. The pace has shifted toward long-term recovery with 18 committees formed across the State to address unmet needs of their communities. We continue to support the parishes that are still in the stages of repopulation.

Part of this support has come through a grant that we received from the Corporation for National Service to provide AmeriCorps*VISTAs to serve with the Long Term Recovery Committees. The grant is in the beginning stages, but will be an invaluable resource as the work of these groups moves forward.

Many of the LAVOAD members have or are going through debrief conferences or after action reviews at this point. Our State organization will be holding its State conference later this month. It will include such an exercise to point out positives and negatives of our combined response and make recommendations on how we can grow and build upon our experiences of the last 6 months.

Personally, this has been a life changing experience. I have seen things that I had never dreamed of and pushed myself beyond anything that I ever thought I could do. These storms have made me reevaluate myself and my life and what is truly important. My faith in God has given me the strength to honor my commitment to serve the people of my State and my organizations, the Food Bank and LAVOAD, when it felt as if everything was falling apart.

There are some very special people that worked in the State EOC. I am not speaking of the brass or the elected officials, the people that were there all hours of the day and night finding a way to make things work for weeks and months. They are heroes in my book and have gotten more criticism than recognition.

No one group can be the "end all, be all" solution to a disaster. It takes everyone, and it is imperative that we remember that everyone has something to offer and that as a responder you do not have all of the answers. Sometimes it is easy to get into a mentality of "We have always done it this way." Being open to new ideas can be one of the most powerful resources we have.

Education is a powerful tool as well. Many of the groups within government, on all levels, did not comprehend the role or the capabilities of Voluntary Organizations. Of course, this situation has rewritten all of the records for every group. We have all responded beyond what we thought we were capable of doing. More evacuees/survivors were sheltered, fed, clothed in this operation than ever before.

One way to better structure the approach of government is to include the VOADs in their planning processes and to educate those employees that are involved in disaster response at each agency about Voluntary Organizations. Another approach would be to include the VOADs in training and exercises.

Traditionally the activities of the VOADs have centered on the response to natural disasters. Oklahoma City and September 11th have certainly changed the arena in which we may be called to respond. Voluntary Agencies need more training with regard to man made disasters, biological and chemical weapons, etc. Pandemics are another area where training will be invaluable.

Communication between the government entities and the Voluntary Agencies needs to be addressed. Clear channels need to be outlined.

Again, thank you for including me in this conversation. I think it is imperative that these types of discussions happen as we go forward.

Sincerely,

JAYNE WRIGHT,
Executive Director.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Feltman.

HEATHER FELTMAN, LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Ms. FELTMAN. Thank you, Senator.

I just want to reiterate that joint planning is essential and necessary as we move forward, and at the stage of these disasters that we have experienced over the last 24 months, it has stretched us all to continue to come up with new ways to respond effectively.

Also, I think that coordinating creates an understanding of roles and functions and capabilities between the faith-based and community organizations in any structure of government. To me, that impacts the level of trust in relationships and what you can count on. I think that is key, because what we have experienced on the ground is sometimes transition of resources. If it is FEMA or Salvation Army or Red Cross, and they are living out their mandate, sometimes, as we come in behind with voluntary organizations, we could maybe really do some resource-sharing, and if these are kind of laid out prior to the time that we are living the disaster, it could be very beneficial and we might not have such a long, dragged out time, and be able to respond quicker.

The last thing I want to say is that from what we have been doing, I am concerned about the medical situation. We have had several congregations acting as free clinics. Again, the impact on the infrastructure in the medical community in rural, no less, but also for the vulnerable populations, the disabled, the elderly, the mentally ill, the chronically ill, we have seen a huge necessity to look at the scale of that. Yes, FEMA and Red Cross could stop by and write prescriptions, but that was for 2 or 3 days of critical looking at where those prescriptions could be coming from, who was going to hold them, who could get over to write the prescription. We are under a state-of-emergency, which is very good, and it kind of allows us a guiding road map right now, but that will be transitioning before too long. And we are doing free clinics, but I am really concerned about the underinsured and uninsured and how doctors will be able to handle that.

Thank you.

[Response to question of the committee by Ms. Feltman:]

RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND
PENSIONS BY HEATHER FELTMAN

Question. How can local, State or Federal Agencies better structure their approach to disaster relief to support the work of community-based organizations?

Answer. Key for success in the future—communication and planning with community-based organizations and key disaster personnel.

- Joint planning necessary;
- Community-based center within or adjacent to Disaster Recovery Center—one-stop shop for services and referrals—track trends;
- Assessment of key medical facilities—be able to establish temporary structures for the purpose of distribution and goods and resources if necessary;
- Impact on Free Clinics—growing population of uninsured, unemployed, or underemployed who are displaced. The decrease in patients able to pay for health care impacts the physician and provider ability to cover overhead costs. Trend—M.D.'s moving from the area, bed closures in hospitals. Access to conventional and/or group insurance is limited;
- Preparing for the next time—include the faith- and community-based organizations in discussions for future planning and response—most of the organizations have been recipients of information in a haphazard way—make organizations part of creating the solution and thus achieving success in the response efforts;
- Coordinating response creates an understanding of the roles and capabilities of faith-based and community groups—trust is developed, not seen as an unknown entity;
- Sharing of key resources (food)—support the value of skilled volunteerism.

Contact Information: Participant: Heather L. Feltman, Lutheran Disaster Response Executive Director, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631, Telephone: 773-380-2719; Heather.Feltman@elca.org.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Green.

**THOMAS E. GREEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES, LITTLE ROCK, AR**

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Senator.

One of the challenges for us, being a neighboring State, in Arkansas—we of course are fortunate in that the disasters come every year, and not in the scale of Katrina, but from ice storms, floods, and tornadoes. The good thing about our State is that we have somewhat developed a process. All the organizations at this table—most of the organizations, I should say—are part of that process. The Community Action Agencies, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, different church groups, all play a vital role in trying to address the needs.

One of the key things that happened with the Katrina evacuees in Arkansas was that because of the inundated number of person, we had to open up Fort Chaffee. We had not done that since the Cuban evacuees came to Arkansas and the Vietnamese refugees came to Arkansas. Because of the number of people who came, we had to use that process. What it enabled us to do then was to look at our voluntary sources in the State. We were able to utilize our church camps to house people; we were able to use different programs, social agency office, which is a part of the Department of Health and Human Services within the State of Arkansas, provided the medical care—food stamps, all of those basic needs.

But as someone indicated, the basic needs are temporary. Now we are talking about 1,000 people still in hotels within the State of Arkansas. We have to look at long-term opportunities, and the Community Action Agency Network is one of those vital resources that we utilize. They are providing those services and trying to

make the difference, because for emergency needs, we all volunteered. My church gave housing, we gave clothes, we gave food—but those were temporary. The permanent resources are important, and that is the thing that we have to look at. The Community Action Network is there and is going to be the long-term provider for a lot of those services.

One thing that I think is vital that we need to keep in mind is that the communications need to be ongoing, the coordination needs to be ongoing. It is important that we do not stop the process, because at the local level, regardless of who is there, the community-based organizations are going to play a vital role in resolving the problems of those communities.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Green follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS E. GREEN

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on behalf of the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP). My name is Thomas Green, and I am the Director of the Arkansas Office of Community Services.

I am pleased to report to this committee that according to the data the National Association for State Community Services Programs collected at the request of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network, which is made up of nearly 1,100 local Community Action Agencies (CAAs) nationwide, was able to respond with speed and flexibility to the needs of over 355,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Our network has supported these Katrina evacuees by providing affordable housing, job training, reliable emergency services, and quality health care, among other critical recovery services. Unfortunately, our job is not yet done.

Today, the State administered CSBG Network continues to play a pivotal role in the recovery of all of the States affected by Hurricane Katrina. State CSBG administrators are making a concerted effort to provide critical assistance across State Governments, and to closely coordinate statewide relief efforts by working through the extensive community action agency network.

In my home State of Arkansas, the CSBG network assisted over 65,000 evacuees, and helped over 13,635 of these evacuees with CSBG discretionary grants totaling \$69,000. Under the direction of the State, the 16 Arkansas community action agencies worked with their local communities to address the gaps in services that were already being provided, including: transportation services to local agencies to apply for assistance, food for food pantries, medicines, clothing, home furnishings, and deposits for housing.

The State administered network of Community Action Agencies have also begun to provide the *long-term assistance* that evacuees need as they relocate and re-establish themselves through self-sufficiency and family development programs. These programs offer comprehensive approaches to selecting and offering supportive services that promote, empower and nurture individuals and families seeking economic self-sufficiency. At a minimum, these approaches include:

- An assessment of the issues facing the family and the resources they bring to address these issues;
- A written plan for financial independence and self-sufficiency;
- An individualized mix of services to help the participant implement the plan;
- Professional staff who can establish trusting, long-term relationships with program participants; and
- A formal method to track and evaluate progress and adjust the plan as needed.

The CSBG Network has remained true to its fundamental purpose: to organize and provide a range of necessary services related to the needs of low-income individuals, families, and communities. The CSBG network helps to promote these services, which in turn helps to empower families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

According to the most recent CSBG Statistical Report, in 2004 the CSBG Network served over 15 million people, or approximately 6 million low-income families. Also in 2004, more than 3.7 million children, 1.7 million seniors, and 1.1 million disabled individuals were served by the CSBG network. This Network is deeply committed to helping ensure the stability of all low-income individuals, families, communities, and States.

I am proud of the assistance that the Arkansas Office of Community Services, and the National Association for State Community Services Programs, has provided to the Hurricane Katrina evacuees. The State administrators of the CSBG and the CSBG network have an impressive history of effective and efficient service provision. With Congress' continued support, our network will continue to serve our Nation's most vulnerable populations with swift and reliable expertise. Under the direction of the State and in partnership with other community-based and faith-based organizations, the CSBG network will continue its critical assistance to the Hurricane evacuees over the long-term as they relocate, re-establish themselves, and work toward total self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.
Mr. Daroff.

WILLIAM DAROFF, UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Mr. DAROFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the United Jewish Communities, thank you and your staff for inviting all of us to participate.

I would just like to follow up on what some of our colleagues have mentioned today, and that is that much of what we were able to accomplish, at least in the early stages, was due to happenstance—relationships that we had, phone numbers, knowing the mobile phone number to the Senator's chief of staff in Mississippi, for instance, having relationships at the White House that could cut through some of the bureaucracy—and those relationships obviously were by happenstance and an ability to formalize that by forming disaster task forces with representatives from government and community-based organizations through the VOAD process and through others I think is an excellent way to move forward. Maintaining and opening ongoing dialogues throughout the disaster to establish priorities and needs and to eliminate duplication is important. Coordinating essential recovery services and assigning roles between government and community-based organizations should be a priority, as well as publicizing locations of mass feeding centers.

A couple of my colleagues have mentioned the mental health issue, and having just come back from the region a couple weeks ago, there is a belief by many of the folks down there that there is a burgeoning mental health crisis that, as folks see that their last appeal to FEMA has been denied, that their last appeal to their insurance agency has been denied, and they see that this is the final amount of money that they are going to be getting, there will be a massive mental health crisis. And the infrastructure, as I'm sure you know, Senator, in much of the region was not great to begin with, and with the exodus of folks post-Katrina, it is a crisis that we all need to address.

Similar to that, we had folks who came from neighboring States and from across the country—doctors, dentists, social workers—who, because of State licensure restrictions, were not able to practice their professions in those States. We would advocate for there to be some sort of temporary relief that allows for the bending of these certification regulations.

The other thing I want to mention is that, speaking about faith-based organizations, what we heard throughout the region was that faith-based organizations, churches, synagogues, the organizations around this table, really came in to save the day and to help

where government was not able to help. We believe that the policy should be one that encourages our organizations and incentivizes us to care and help.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Daroff follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM C. DAROFF

Good morning. I am William Daroff, Vice President for Public Policy and Director of the Washington Office of United Jewish Communities (UJC). I want to thank the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) for the kind invitation to participate in this hearing focusing on the contributions of community-based organizations toward the post-Katrina and post-Rita relief and reconstruction efforts along our Nation's Gulf Coast region. I commend the Senate HELP Committee for recognizing the value of community-based organizations and the important role they play in enhancing, serving, protecting, and rebuilding the places called "communities."

I have been asked in particular to comment on the activities undertaken by United Jewish Communities, in which we have effectively responded to the national disasters in the Gulf Coast region by working in partnership with other community-based organizations, as well as with local, State, and Federal officials. It is an honor and a privilege to be here today and share the UJC story. I would like to start by describing exactly what UJC is and how it has partnered with others to address the needs of the citizens of the Gulf Coast region. I believe that the efforts put forth by UJC in the region can serve as an action framework for others to make a difference in how our Nation responds to national disasters.

United Jewish Communities is the national organization that represents and serves 155 Jewish federations and 400 independent Jewish communities in more than 800 cities and towns across North America. UJC is the central planning and coordinating organization for an extensive network of Jewish health and social services. We provide a wide realm of services through thousands of affiliated hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care campuses, refugee resettlement organizations, children and family service agencies, job counseling centers and food banks, community centers and camps, and primary and secondary schools, as well as our inter-related national organizations. UJC is one of America's largest and most effective networks of social service providers. This network provides support for more than 1 million clients each year in the Jewish and general community who are vulnerable and in need of assistance: families, the elderly, new immigrants, and the sick or disabled.

In addition, to unilateral activity, UJC is a national board member of the Emergency Food Shelter Board and has worked with United Way as part of a non-profit task force to discuss how the Nation's largest nonprofits can cooperatively meet the social service needs of hurricane victims. UJC partners with other National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster (NVOAD) agencies including the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, and Salvation Army to provide aid. We also serve on the National Advisory Committee for the Hurricane Fund for the Elderly of Grantmakers in Aging, which is a partnership with the Administration on Aging to direct philanthropic dollars and resources to organizations providing services to the most vulnerable older population in the Gulf Coast region.

As an example of how UJC can quickly mobilize its vast network of federations and social services affiliates, I would like to share the following:

UJC operates a standing Emergency Relief Committee that can marshal its resources within 24 hours. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, this committee was charged with identifying the emerging disaster relief needs that UJC could help meet. To meet these emerging needs, UJC and the federations of North America raised more than \$28 million in cash through a "Katrina Relief Fund" and facilitated the contribution of millions of dollars more through in-kind donations. Before the landfall of Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, UJC federations and our Gulf Coast affiliates were promptly alerted and began immediately arranging emergency shelter and food centers for evacuees. UJC sent senior staff to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to help develop and coordinate support among community-based organizations. Their mission was to reinforce the infrastructure of Baton Rouge to handle the incoming evacuating New Orleans residents. In addition, UJC sent staff to Houston, Texas, to help buttress our Houston and New Orleans affiliates in planning strategic and tactical responses. Shortly thereafter, UJC funding was allocated to local communities in the Gulf Coast region for emergency needs such as food and basic supplies, financial aid, mental-health counseling, temporary housing, and respite care for thousands of evacuees in the Jewish and general communities.

In the initial aftermath of the storm, UJC facilitated temporary shelter for Katrina evacuees in Jewish communities across the Southwest and South, including Austin, Dallas and Houston, Texas; Birmingham, Alabama; Baton Rouge and Shreveport, Louisiana; Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; and Central Florida and as far south as Palm Beach, Florida. We also helped establish an e-mail and telephone communications network for evacuees through local host federations.

Last month, senior officials from UJC and the federation system conducted a weeklong site visit to the region. The primary purpose of this site visit was to review the progress of the expenditures made from earlier UJC allocations, and to assess the more long-term social service needs of hurricane victims in the Jewish and general population. In addition, UJC wanted to express its strong commitment to aid the affected Gulf Coast communities in mapping recovery strategies.

In Mississippi, UJC met with the Honorable Connie Rocko, President, of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors, General Joseph Spraggins, Director of the Harrison County Emergency Operations, Brian Sanderson, Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal, and Suzanne Case, Director of the Gulfport office for U.S. Senator Thad Cochran. We gave these local, State, and Federal representatives a report of our efforts such as allocating emergency financial assistance to the Jackson, Mississippi community; along with sending thousands of school books and hundreds of boxes of clothing and blankets to Biloxi, Mississippi; and coordinating emergency financial and social service aid for Hurricane Katrina victims with St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. We also asked the local, State, and Federal representatives how we could further support their government efforts to rebuild the Gulf Coast. The unanimous response was to continue "the UJC network efforts."

Moreover, UJC reached out to the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau through its Executive Director, Stephen Richer, to gather background information on the post-Katrina economic impact on the region's primary revenue base and better assess how UJC could be resourceful. We also met with Virginia Newton, President of the Board of Trustees for the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and Beverly Ward, from the U.S. Department of Education (now detailed to Mississippi). We discussed with these State and Federal officials the impact on the community's education system and in particular how students of the Gulf Coast region were able to relocate and continue their studies. Earlier, UJC had coordinated a donation by a New York advertising agency of 15 computers and 2,500 backpacks containing school supplies from "Project Backpack" for a high school in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

In Houston and Dallas, Texas, UJC pooled its resources and partnered with the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast. The mission was to assess immediate needs and identify local community-based organizations that regularly provide emergency and social service needs. Such organizations would now be tasked to double their workload with a burgeoning "new" population post Hurricane Katrina. In partnership with the Dallas Jewish Federation, UJC donated \$250,000 to the Dallas Mayor's Housing initiative to assist in providing housing for Katrina evacuees.

UJC federations and affiliated groups interacted with many local, State, and Federal Government officials in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. A prime example of this kind of interaction in Baton Rouge involved local volunteer Richard Lipsey and the Baton Rouge Jewish Federation to coordinate efforts with the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office so that off-duty officers and local volunteers were able to rescue individuals who were trapped in New Orleans. Friends and relatives called the New Orleans Federation, which was temporarily housed in Houston, with names and addresses of people who remained in New Orleans. The East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's office along with Baton Rouge volunteers then went in and evacuated them as well as anyone else they came across. The East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's office was also involved in the trip to rescue several Torah scrolls and other sacred objects from damaged synagogues in New Orleans.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston participated in Texas Governor Rick Perry's faith-based organization conference calls, which assisted with the coordination of hurricane relief efforts to maximize input and output. They also coordinated hurricane relief efforts with Texas State Senator Todd Staples. In addition, the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston funded a grant for approximately \$75,000 to the Harris County Medical Reserve Corporation to support 2,000 doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals at Reliant Stadium and the George R. Brown Convention Center providing medical treatment to Hurricane Katrina victims being housed there. This grant was timely, since the program was close to exhausting its funds. The medical program also increased from 200 volunteers to 2,000 volunteers.

UJC provided financial assistance to over 12 non-Jewish community based organizations such as the Ripley House, West Houston Assistance Ministries, and the Sec-

ond Mile Mission Center. These community-based organizations offered food pantries, soup kitchens, clothing centers, counseling, coordinated housing, job training, and job bank centers for Hurricane Katrina victims. During our recent site visit, we met with a number of Katrina victims who had relocated from New Orleans to The Ripley House. These former New Orleans residents were staffing the Ripley House's new "stay connected" program that allows e-mail set-up and cellular telephone communication between victims and their families separated in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Some of the funds raised by UJC have been designated to rebuild community infrastructure, including federation buildings, day schools, and synagogues severely damaged by the storm. Other funds will be used to rebuild Jewish life in the affected areas and re-attract those who were evacuated to places across the country.

UJC is an organization with a long history in effectively forming public-private partnerships. A key to that partnership over the years has been an on-going dialogue with civic and community leaders about the issues that citizens deal with day-to-day and during a national disaster. In preparation for the weeklong site tour, UJC networked with the Congressional delegation and the Governor's office of Mississippi, as well as the offices of the Mayors in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Houston. First, UJC invited representatives from Federal, State, and local government offices as well as community leaders and clergy to meet in Gulfport, Mississippi; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; and New Orleans, Louisiana. The two main topics of discussion at these small forums were the current status of the Gulf Coast region devastated by Hurricane Katrina and in particular how to begin to restore the social fabric of the Gulf Coast communities. Secondly, the eight-member site team toured on foot and by bus towns and cities now in ruins with destroyed highways/streets, businesses, recreation/tourist areas, and suburbs/residential areas that form our Nations' Gulf Coast communities.

We also toured Gulf Coast-based FEMA facilities and a trailer park (a "FEMAville") where some hurricane victims and their families currently reside. In addition, the UJC site team met with hurricane victims who volunteered to share their personal stories of how they survived and had relocated to other towns, cities, and States. The hurricane victims also shared their views on whether they had plans to return to their respective communities and begin rebuilding their homes and lives. The hurricane victims gave first-hand accounts of the hours leading up to Hurricane Katrina making land fall along our Nation's Gulf Coast region and the aftermath they personally confronted later once Hurricane Katrina dissipated. The stories—and there were AND continue to be many experienced by native Gulf Coast residents—reveal the initial horror and desperation in the wake of a national disaster.

A more effective response can be achieved to ensure prompt relief in a major national disaster. We recommend that the following action steps be adopted, which can lead to a more effective partnership between local, State, and Federal Governments and community-based organizations:

- Form a "Disaster Task Force" with representatives from government and community-based organizations to assess needs, guide funding, identify gaps and solve problems;
- Devise a match-up system for local, State, and Federal First Responders with community-based organizations as partners to aid relief efforts;
- Maintain an open and ongoing dialogue throughout the disaster to establish priorities for needs and funding and eliminate duplication;
- Coordinate essential recovery services and assign roles by dividing duties between government officials and community-based organizations;
- Publicize guidelines with respect to publicly- and privately-available housing and set-up a registry of available housing;
- Publicize locations of mass feeding centers;
- Establish emergency toll-free hotlines for disaster victims and share the telephone numbers with community-based organizations to circulate;
- Publicize information and referrals phone numbers for health and human services such as medical treatment/evaluation and counseling;
- Expand licensure waivers for medical, dental, and counseling professionals, so that they are able to give aid in emergency situations in States where they are not licensed;
- Expand guidelines for mortgage and utility payments for homeowners and leasing costs for renters;
- Establish procedures whereby evacuees are able to bring their pets with them and/or establish sufficient facilities for sheltering pets; and,
- Facilitate an organized distribution of in-kind donations by establishing a centralized location for food, clothing and other supplies.

There is a critical need to match generosity with distribution in a national disaster. Local, State, and Federal Governments working with community-based organizations can design an efficient system to meet basic needs and address disbursement in a national disaster.

UJC has a strong interest in a more effective public-private partnership and would like to continue to work with local, State, and Federal Governments to aid a more effective response to a national disaster. I saw evidence of human kindness, compassion, acts of courage, and outreach between diverse communities. I was heartened, for the stories I heard and what I witnessed first-hand reflect the true character and spirit of our Nation's communities. They are strong, they are resilient, and they can be greatly helped and strengthened by a structured partnership with regular and concise communication between local, State, and Federal Governments and community-based organizations.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present the UJC story.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Harris.

TANYA HARRIS, LEAD ORGANIZER IN THE LOWER NINTH WARD OF NEW ORLEANS FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR REFORM NOW

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you.

The experience that I had was as an evacuee going into shelters, going into a Red Cross shelter with 1,500 people and five telephones and, a month later, two computers. Everything that we did inside those shelters, any information that we came across, was word-of-mouth.

So I think that a key part of this is making sure that information is available and properly disseminated amongst the evacuees or people who are victims of a disaster.

What happened was that ACORN, as a matter of fact, I had to start organizing inside my own shelter in order to get information to people. And ACORN began doing this in other shelters around the Southeast region. The questions just kept arising about how do you get information, how do you get in touch with FEMA. These people were inside shelters, inside of Red Cross shelters, and did not have access to this information. So that is also a key component, having access to information, and also using our networks, of course, our own networks that were set up before Katrina, also using text messaging and things like that to get people information. But there needs to be some way to get people information more quickly and more efficiently.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Harris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TANYA HARRIS

Good Afternoon, my name is Tanya Harris and I am a community organizer for ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. I am also a Katrina Survivor; I was born and raised in the lower ninth ward of New Orleans. Luckily my family had the resources to leave when Katrina hit. Eventually we ended up staying in a shelter right outside of Baton Rouge in Gonzales, LA, there we reconnected with ACORN. There were also volunteers there from the Red Cross who didn't seem ready to deal with a disaster this big. Even though we were in their shelter we had very little access to information, there was information on how to get out of Louisiana but if you were looking for services where we were you couldn't find anything. There were about 1,500 people there and only five phones and two computers. The only way that we got to services was word of mouth.

We have been active ACORN members for 20 years and ACORN was a piece of home for us when I didn't know when we would be able to get back. So I started working with ACORN doing a different type of community organizing, not door to door, but bed to bed in shelters. And at the same time that my family found ACORN in Baton Rouge, ACORN offices in other cities started to reach out to Katrina sur-

vivors, and New Orleans ACORN Members were pointed to their nearest ACORN office through ACORN's Web site and hotline in Houston, in Los Angeles, in San Antonio, in Dallas, in Arkansas, in Atlanta and even in New York. ACORN members all over were offering their homes and their assistance to their brothers and sisters who had been affected by the hurricane.

And ACORN starting hearing back from survivors, there were many questions and concerns. And we searched for the answers. Some of them we found after hours and days and multiple calls to FEMA and other Government Agencies. Many of the answers we had to provide ourselves.

That's when the ACORN Housing Corporation started to send their housing counselors all over the country to work with displaced homeowners to contact their mortgage lenders. We found out that even though many large lenders had decided to stop foreclosures on homes, several smaller companies were still expecting people to pay their mortgages in full and on time. And if they didn't homeowners were slapped with large fees and the threat of losing their homes. ACORN took on lenders like Ocwen Loan Services for continuing to charge prepayment fees and we won.

Next after searching for help to get homes rebuilt in New Orleans, we decided to start our own program. We raised over a million dollars and hired crews to remove debris, rip out drywall, sanitize homes to get rid of the mold and of course tarping roofs to prevent any more water damage. So far the ACORN Home Clean Out Demonstration Program has cleaned out over 700 homes, and we plan to have 1,000 done before the end of March.

As Government assistance started to run out ACORN looked to work with our allies to ensure that Katrina Survivors got all of the financial assistance that they could, so last month we announced our partnership with the William Jefferson Clinton Foundation to do Earned Income Tax Credit outreach. As a partner in the EITC Program, ACORN's Katrina Benefits Access Project will provide EITC screening and free tax preparation services to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

There is a lot of work to be done in rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. And the work that has been completed would have been easier if only we had the leadership of the Federal Government to look to. ACORN helped start NOAH, New Opportunities for Advocacy and Hope. This coalition held a rally in support of Louisiana workers getting contracts and fair pay in the rebuilding process and won the reinstatement of Davis Bacon. We also attended meetings with members of VOAD, but not much has come of it. We need the Government to play a leading role.

ACORN would like to be a part of a comprehensive disaster relief plan that is formulated, because we know New Orleans. The people who live there have been our members for decades, and we are dedicated to doing everything possible to assist people in the rebuilding process, to make sure that every voice is heard during decisionmaking, and to ensure the right of return for the many who are scattered throughout the country.

We couldn't wait for the Federal Government to rebuild our lives, but we would like to work with you to make sure that there is an overall disaster relief plan that includes every person in our city.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Franklin.

Ms. FRANKLIN. I just wanted to address that a bit in that in the rural areas, we used our case managers from the CSBG unit, from the Community Action Agency, and the Head Start program to go into the shelters with their laptops, and they were able to get the evacuees their FEMA numbers and get in contact with the Red Cross and all the other services that they needed.

But one of the things that I thought would be so critical and that we needed to think about was having a national disaster response policy that would include all of those pieces, and the roles of the faith-based organizations and the CSBG unit, and the other nonprofits, and the CDFIs—all of those pieces pulled together in one policy so that when disasters happen like Katrina and Rita, we will be able to go to that policy and be able to relax rules and relax regulations so that we would be able to help people and help them quickly.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Hawks.

MAJOR TODD HAWKS, NATIONAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECRETARY AND ASSOCIATE COMMUNITY RELATIONS SECRETARY FOR THE SALVATION ARMY

Mr. HAWKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You have some of our thoughts and observations as relates to our thoughts as to how the Federal Government could assist NGOs and faith-based organizations as relates to disaster services.

It is interesting, following up on that thought, one of our recommendations—and it is actually materializing in part here today—is that we include NGOs as part of the process of revising the national response plan and making sure that NGOs have a big part, particularly in ESF-6 aspects of the national plan.

One thing I want to note is that many of the folks around this table are generally at almost all disasters, and I think the thing that Katrina brought to bear was several hundred organizations and faith-based groups and individuals who perhaps had never been a part of the process before. And one of our recommendations—and the Federal Government can assist us with this, whether it is FEMA or whoever—is to incorporate NGOs in the exercises and training so that there is some interagency cross-training going on between the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the faith-based organizations—everybody, from those who are very familiar with the systems to those who are least familiar with the systems—so that we all understand the different terms, the different acronyms, so that we know the assets and the experiences that the various groups bring to bear, and then they could be better utilized in the services.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hawks follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJOR TODD HAWKS

Good morning. The Salvation Army appreciates this opportunity to discuss our disaster relief services and to share our thoughts on how governments and NGOs can collaborate more effectively to provide food, water, supplies, and other needed services to disaster survivors.

When this committee convened a similar roundtable discussion shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, my colleague Major Marilyn White participated in the conversation. As Major White indicated in her testimony, The Salvation Army's response to disasters entails:

- Providing food and water to both survivors and first-responders;
- Helping survivors clean up homes that weathered the storm;
- Providing shelter to those who lost their homes;
- Utilizing case management to assess the needs of families and harness the social services needed to help survivors put their lives back together again; and,
- Offering emotional and spiritual comfort to disaster victims and emergency workers coping with the stress of the disaster.

Now, 6 months later, I can update you on our activities in the Gulf Coast area and hopefully shed some light on how coordination can be improved in the future.

One might assume that the need for our initial response services in the Gulf Coast would be tapering off. To the contrary, we're expanding our services and shifting the nature of our activities from immediate relief to recovery. We've doubled the number of caseworkers and opened another distribution center in New Gretna, Louisiana, to better serve the people of the New Orleans area.

For a better sense of how an average family might benefit from these services, I'll share with you some of the highlights of a recent report from our Southern Mississippi Recovery Command Center. We now have four Disaster Recovery Centers operating in the area, in Pascagoula, Biloxi, Gulfport, and Pass Christian. Distributed at these centers are essential supplies required for returning home: boxes of food, cleanup kits, and other household items. For those who are unable to return home and are living in FEMA trailers, we're providing dishes, silverware, and other

household necessities. Our case managers in the Disaster Recovery Centers are also working with families to assess their needs, and it is through this process that we are beginning to distribute furniture and appliances.

We are also involved in long-term recovery efforts, although we often act in partnership with other organizations when we do so. Again using southern Mississippi as an example, The Salvation Army has partnered with Project Teamwork to house volunteer groups that are working to repair homes and remove debris so that families can return to their homes.

We do not have an exit plan for the Gulf Coast. Our best and brightest will be there, on the ground, in the region for at least 2 full years.

The American people have supported all of these activities through donations, entrusting The Salvation Army to use their gifts efficiently and effectively.

Each charitable organization uses contributions in a way that reflects their individual strengths. Different organizations have different strengths. Our use of contributions reflects these strengths in both the response and recovery phases.

To date, the Army has received \$336 million in donations. We've spent one-third of it—\$122 million—largely on initial response services. Of the \$122 million spent so far, 70 percent has gone towards direct financial assistance to survivors—including gift cards, accommodations assistance and utilities assistance. The remaining 30 percent of the total spent has gone towards meal services, cleaning and personal hygiene supplies for survivors, equipment, and transportation and lodging for Salvation Army disaster personnel.

The remaining donations will largely be spent on recovery projects, which typically require significant financial resources.

That summarizes our activities and our distribution of donations to date. At this point, I'd like to share with you some of our thoughts and observations about the response to Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Chairman, The Salvation Army has over a century of experience in responding to disasters. Still, as an organization we've learned valuable lessons from the activities in the Gulf Coast—about how we can improve our own services and organizational structure to respond more efficiently and effectively when the next disaster strikes, and how NGOs and governments can better work together to achieve our common goals.

Thoughts and Observations on Katrina Response

Given the nature of our activities, our observations will apply almost exclusively to the mass care element of the government's response. In the National Response Plan, those activities fall under Emergency Support Function #6, Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services.

From our perspective, the types of services that were needed by Gulf Coast residents were no different than those provided to other victims of earlier hurricanes. The crucial differences between the response to Katrina and earlier hurricanes were the geographic scope of the disaster, the scale of the damage, and the multiple types of disasters triggered by a single event.

If Congress is inclined to make changes in the Federal Government's disaster response protocols, then The Salvation Army has identified four items that we would like you to consider.

1. Include NGO Community When Revising the National Response Plan

We have been heartened by calls to revise the National Response Plan and to better integrate charitable organizations into disaster response plans. The system as we know it doesn't work as well as it could. If I was limited to making a single suggestion today, it would be that the NGO community—all of the key players within the NGO community—should have a seat at the table as the National Response Plan is revised.

Why? For two reasons. First, many States and municipalities have used the National Response Plan as a template for crafting their own response plans. Consequently, any coordination problems in the Federal plan are frequently repeated at the State and local levels.

Second, the National Response Plan makes a broad assumption about NGOs that I would challenge. The plan assumes that NGOs will always be able to respond and to fill in the service gaps. For a typical disaster, this would be a reasonable assumption. For a catastrophic event, however, this is a risky assumption. Simultaneous events would seriously degrade the NGO community's ability to respond, as would a disaster zone that threatened the lives of volunteers. If the NGO community is consulted during the revision process, then this type of assumption can be properly addressed.

2. Assign a Government Office as the Primary Agency Responsible for the National Response Plan's ESF #6

In our view, the role of government is to lead and coordinate. The role of organizations such as The Salvation Army is to support those efforts.

Yet under ESF #6, an NGO—rather than a Federal Agency—is charged with coordinating the mass care activities of other NGOs. The Salvation Army urges you to review this organizational structure carefully.

It might be worth noting that many States have taken a decidedly different path in designing their mass care plans. These States have tasked a State government agency with the responsibility for providing mass care coordination. Governors have recognized that they cannot order an NGO to perform a particular task. Moreover, there is insufficient accountability if the NGO fails to perform as expected. Consequently many States have moved to ensure that the function is performed by tasking a State agency to do it.

If you are wondering how the Federal Government could possibly coordinate the NGO community, I would point out that FEMA already has a position called a Voluntary Agency Liaison or VAL. That position could be empowered to manage and coordinate the NGO community, and those Federal employees could be held accountable for coordinating and for identifying existing or emerging gaps in services.

Incorporate NGOs in Exercises and Training

The single most effective vehicle for collaboration among government agencies and NGOs is on-going inter-agency cross-training.

Standardized training is needed because all of the NGOs—especially the well-intentioned organizations and individuals who are new entrants in the disaster services field—must understand the government's emergency management systems and the language of those systems. Terms must have the same meaning when used by any government agency or NGO. It may even be prudent to establish a shared code of conduct for NGOs, similar to the code of conduct guiding the actions of international humanitarian relief organizations.

Congress could help this by conditioning the receipt of State and local training grants upon the inclusion of NGOs in planning and training.

Educate the Public

Just as there are roles for government and charitable organizations in disaster response, there is also a role for people who are moved to help in some way.

All too frequently, people and corporations will send unwanted items to a disaster site. Their motivation is laudable, but the arrival of unsolicited in-kind contributions at a disaster site is problematic. Volunteers have to be diverted from feeding and directly assisting victims to sort through truckloads of miscellaneous clothes and other unneeded items. Further, storage space in a disaster is scarce and expensive.

Likewise, the unexpected arrival of unsolicited and untrained volunteers is also problematic. As you can imagine, this situation taxes the ability of non-profits to effectively respond in the midst of a disaster.

The unvarnished truth of the matter is that the best response is to send cash and stay out of the disaster zone, particularly when personal safety and health are at risk.

The Federal Government should take the lead role in educating the American people about how to help disaster survivors. This could be achieved through public service announcements or by making prominent statements to that effect at the time of a disaster.

Plans for 2006

As I mentioned, The Salvation Army has made improvements in our own procedures so that we are better prepared for the coming hurricane season or any other disaster.

- We've learned that we can't do it all. No single organization can deliver all of the services needed by a distressed community or region.
- Instead, we focus our efforts on what we do best—providing food service, distributing essential relief supplies, and offering emotional and spiritual care to those in need.
- And we collaborate with other organizations to avoid duplication of resources and to expedite delivery of services, enhancing our collective ability to serve those in need. For example, The Southern Baptists frequently prepare the meals we serve from our canteens. The Volunteer housing mentioned previously is available for volunteer groups organized by other NGOs.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.
Mr. Mahboob.

MOSTAFA MAHBOOB, ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

Mr. MAHBOOB. Thank you, Senator, for inviting Islamic Relief.

I think one of the main things that everybody has been saying is the importance of communication. For Islamic Relief, this is the biggest relief operation that we have undertaken in the U.S., and some of the experiences and the contacts that my colleagues here have had, we learned and acquired as we went along, and that was really helpful. I think that having this system of open communication lines and getting together ahead of a disaster and preparing for it will help all of us to better know each other and know what our strengths are and what our resources are to help each other out during a disaster.

There are a couple of points I want to make and just some suggestions as well. In regard to government agencies or other agencies, for example, one of the best things our relief team in Louisiana has done is that since the beginning, they have been taking supplies from the warehouse that is provided in Baton Rouge and distributing those to areas that need it and do not have access to them.

At the same time, I was in Mississippi for over 2½ months, and there were, from my understanding, resources such as that available, or maybe because we do not get communication of everything that is going on, I was not aware of it, but in Jackson, MS, which is about 2 hours north of Biloxi, which is one of the most devastated areas in Mississippi, that is where I heard the warehouse was.

So one of the major suggestions I would make is having the sites of distribution of resources or registration sites for FEMA and other things that victims need, having close proximity to the disaster sites as well as the people who were affected most.

One of the other obstacles that we faced was a legal obstacle. In Biloxi, MS, there is a big need for mobile showers and laundromats and tents and so forth. One of the things that stopped us from acquiring those supplies was the issue of liability and insurance and so forth. Issues such as that could be addressed in future legislation that allows relief organizations to work a little faster and easier.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mahboob follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MOSTAFA MAHBOOB

Islamic Relief immediately responded to the needs of the victims of Hurricane Katrina—one of the greatest natural disasters in United States history. Islamic Relief committed \$2 million for Katrina relief projects, which include working in the affected areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Houston and Dallas, Texas.

Hurricane Katrina was the first major response to a domestic emergency in Islamic Reliefs history. As part of its emergency response, Islamic Relief has carried out many activities to help victims of the hurricane. Islamic Relief has distributed needed food and non-food goods, purchased a building to house a clinic, provided shelter and housing, helped establish a community coordination and relief center, distributed medicines, hygiene kits, and cleaning kits, helped clean out homes and provided funding to rebuild others, bring volunteers to assist victims, and many other activities to help in the Hurricane Katrina relief and recovery efforts.

Islamic Relief worked with many community-based, national, and governmental organizations in coordinating its relief efforts. A perfect example of such collabo-

rative work is the establishment of the Coordination and Relief Center in Biloxi, Mississippi. Realizing the need to coordinate the efforts of the relief groups coming into the area and to better serve the victims in a timely and efficient manner, Islamic Relief worked with the local city councilman and Oxfam America, among many others, to make the center a reality. Other organizations that worked together to establish this center included: Urban League Ministries, Hands on USA, community groups and churches, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, FEMA, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, International Relief and Development, and many others.

The center held at least two or more meetings per week to gather all the organizations working in the area, share information on the needs of the community, what services the groups were providing, what resources they needed to continue their work, and the challenges they were encountering. The other major goal of the Coordination Center encouraged community members to register in one central location and fill out surveys that informed us of their situation and their immediate needs. Hurricane victims would also pick up supplies that were available at the center. This effort helped match organizations offering specific services to community members who needed those services. Priority was given to the elderly and those needing the services urgently. Working in such a coordinated fashion not only helped the relief groups to efficiently carry out their work, but more importantly helped serve the victims in a more organized and timely fashion.

A key for improving future response efforts is setting up an organized and coordinated emergency response structure—with an open and consistent communication system—that includes the participation of government agencies, relief organizations, and community based groups. Such a system will better coordinate the efforts of all those involved in responding to emergencies. Without this open communication line and an organized system of aid distribution, relief efforts will be tremendously hindered. Groups participating in such a structure would meet regularly to organize the best system in responding to disasters.

Another effective method of responding to disasters is making sure points of supply distributions and other services are located in the area of, or close to the population that is most affected. Due to closed roads, lack of access to transportation, high gas prices, or other hurdles, victims and aid agencies cannot be expected to travel long distances to obtain supplies or services. In affected areas where distribution warehouses or registration sites for obtaining aid were located nearby, the relief efforts were much better. Having such resources close to the area affected will dramatically cut the aid delivery time and help disaster victims obtain vital resources faster.

An area where Government support can improve future efforts is access to statistical information. Any post-disaster data that is collected by agencies or old data that can help aid agencies know the statistical make-up of an affected area can be crucial to relief efforts. For example, when trying to clean hurricane damaged homes, the Coordination Center in Biloxi wanted to send the volunteer groups first to the vulnerable elderly and disabled citizens, but there was no access to such data at hand. To collect this information, surveys had to be conducted in the neighborhood, which consumed time and delayed the delivery of assistance.

In preparation for future disasters, Islamic Relief is planning the creation of an Emergency Response Team that is pre-selected and properly trained to immediately respond to disasters. Learning from our wealth of experience in response to Katrina, our goal is to systemize aspects that worked well and improve in other areas. This team would be trained to respond to disasters and know how to help victims once on the ground. Another area of preparedness includes recruiting the proper number of volunteers, training them with at least the basics, and having a system for them once on the ground. Also, the relationships we have forged with the many other aid agencies will be tapped into to help us respond as a group and better serve the population in need.

Islamic Relief looks forward to continue its emergency relief and development work as we have done in over 30 countries for more than 2 decades. It is essential for all groups involved in disaster response to work together in serving the needs of disaster victims. Islamic Relief would like to thank the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions for inviting us to be a part of this important discussion to better serve those in need when responding to future disasters.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. WILKINS. Thank you, sir.

I do want to comment and just add to some of the comments that were made earlier about some of the resources that can be provided after the disaster.

Ms. Feltman, you talked about the fact that there are resources within your own organization that could come in and help us meet a community need. As we are looking to rebuild the New Orleans social services structure, one of the things that I found was that seeking out some of those smaller agencies and utilizing those resources certainly is helping us rebuild and recovery. And I appreciate the agencies that have come in and are working with us.

As we look at the shelter situation—what you were talking about, Ms. Harris—I really would love to be able to find ways for us to have better communication in the shelters. I think you have a captive population that truly lives and dies by rumor. If we could get some type of communication system in place in our shelters that gives real-time information and also has a caseworker ability that can be brought to bear with some of our population, I think it will do much to help ease some of the anxiety—maybe even getting FEMA coming into the shelter and talking the next time there is a big disaster. Maybe that is a way that we can help provide information. Information is power, and you feel very powerless when you have none of that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Bourg.

Ms. BOURG. I want to speak a little further about the health conditions. We were so alarmed what we were seeing happening with the mold exposure and a lot of the heavy metals exposure in some of the waste matter in the homes. And by the way, I would just like to say also that were it not for the levee failures in New Orleans, which were certainly horrendous, we would mostly be talking about Hurricane Rita. So I just ask my colleagues, when we talk about Hurricane Katrina to either say “Katrina” or “Katrina-Rita.” Those of us in the rural areas who have been devastated by this hurricane would very much appreciate that. We feel left out so much already.

The reentry kits, we had to issue ourselves with the help of Oxfam America, because we asked FEMA to try to do that, and FEMA went to the Centers for Disease Control, who said that only if there was an outbreak of cholera or some such extreme situation should FEMA do that. So FEMA did not do that, even after we had joint hearings in the legislature, in the House and the Senate, to try to urge that FEMA do that. So it was all done through private funds, and really, something needs to be relaxed where FEMA is concerned about the prevention of disease and not waiting until a major outbreak takes place to get these reentry kits and the kinds of things that you needed, like masks and so on.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. NEMITZ. Mr. Chairman, in my own experience, when we hear about communication during a disaster, it is not always a lack of communication. One of the issues that I think the technology age has given us now is almost, at times, too much communication, too much information.

At one point, when I was in Jackson, MS, I had a member of my staff coordinate a series of either FEMA, State emergency management, local emergency management, or national VOAD calls for the day. There were 38 conference calls scheduled for 1 day.

So it is not just a matter of no information—it is from whom are we getting it from, who is credible, and during time of crisis, where do you want to look for the most reliable sources of information. So it is not always the issue of no information; it is sometimes who is talking at the microphone. I think that is something where, at the Federal level, perhaps, there could be some assistance with working with the media, training the media, training other organizations on funneling how they are going to release information from various government agencies, too, because someone saying, “Hey, we are on a phone call with Washington,” when you are out in the sticks, that does carry a lot of weight—but to whom am I talking, and do they have anything worth listening to.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. HAZELWOOD. In the conversations about Mississippi a few moments ago, I was reminded of another issue that came along for us, which is the ability to house volunteers. We have a wealth of volunteers who are able to lend assistance, but one of the greatest needs we have at times is the ways in which volunteers can be housed in the disaster zones.

One of the things—and my colleagues and I approached FEMA—there was a camp—Camp Vanleave, I think is the name of it—in Mississippi that was there that had been used to house families and had then been vacated. We as voluntary agencies approached FEMA and asked if we could use that facility. We would manage it, we would fund it. We just wanted them to leave the tents and leave the village there so we could use it, but we were not allowed to do that.

If something as simple as that could be left there, we would have better access and could bring a lot more resources to the table through our people. But we just simply do not have places to put people.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Daroff.

Mr. DAROFF. Similarly, as far as bringing in volunteers, we do have volunteers from throughout the Jewish communities of the country who would like to come in and help and volunteer. Our understanding from talking to folks down there is that there is obviously a need for it, but there is a critical need for places for these volunteers to stay. I know there are issues with FEMA with the campground outside New Orleans in Baton Rouge, where the number of folks who are able to stay there is actually decreasing because of infrastructure problems.

One thing that Ms. Bourg said that I wanted to follow up on is about liability issues with FEMA. We went down to one of the “FEMA-villes” in Baton Rouge—I don’t know if you have been to one, Mr. Chairman—but the one that we went to is 1,000 trailers, lots of rocks, no grass, no greenery. We asked about what the kids do when they are not in school, and we were told that the New Orleans Saints had offered to donate \$40,000 worth of playground equipment but that FEMA, for liability reasons, could not accept it.

It is going to be a critical issue when school stops and summertime comes around as far as what these kinds are going to be doing, and it is just not a very pleasant environment.

One last thing just to throw into the mix—in talking to General Joseph Spraggens, who is the Harrison County emergency oper-

ations coordinator, he said that one of the biggest problems that they have down there has to do with pets, people not leaving their homes or their homesteads because of their pets. And he could list a dozen folks that he knew just off the top of his head who either stayed behind in order to care for their pets or refused to evacuate because those who were evacuating them would not allow them to take their pets with them. That is obviously a critical need.

Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Ms. Harris.

Ms. HARRIS. Just to piggyback on what Mr. Hazelwood and Mr. Daroff said about the volunteer situation, ACORN has been involved for the past few months in cleaning and stabilizing the homes in New Orleans. We have done almost 800 homes at this point, and we are heavily dependent on volunteer labor. We raised \$1 million to start this program, and the volunteer effort is what has helped us to continue to do this. And we were informed just last week that there would be downsizing of the FEMA camp in Algiers from about 2,000 beds to 600 beds. Well, we are expecting over 1,600 volunteers over the next 2 months, and this kind of activity, this downsizing, is going to heavily impact the way that we are able to help the community in stabilizing the homes in New Orleans and the rebuild effort.

Also, a point that I do not think anyone has brought up is mortgage information and actually aiding people in disaster situations with mortgage help. The Housing Corporation sent out housing counselors to the various shelters to help people with mortgage questions. That is something that comes up that you may not be able to communicate with anybody else, but a lot of people understand one thing—that their mortgage is still due, regardless of whether they have a job or the house still exists.

So that is also a problem for people who have mortgages, who have questions about their mortgages during a time of disaster and what is going to happen. These fees are still accruing, and we actually had to engage ourselves in a fight with the loan services because they were charging repayment fees to people as they were going through a disaster situation. So that is also an issue that should be out at the forefront.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Bourg.

Ms. BOURG. Senator, we have also had volunteers from 14 States and two counties, and I wonder if there is a national good samaritan law that protects folks who go in and work in a disaster area. It seems to me that that would be extremely helpful, that—unless there were intentional gross negligence or intentional harm—there ought to be some sort of national good samaritan law to protect those folks.

Finally, I would just like to say a little bit on behalf of the Community Development Financial Institutions. I think that strengthening those in America, especially in rural communities, is very critical in getting some affordable capital out for the rebuilding and redevelopment effort. Those Community Development Financial Institutions that are chartered by the Treasury I think are very critical.

The new markets tax credits that you have done in the Senate and in the Congress are very important, because that is going to help us rebuild those businesses all along the coast. So the set-aside dollars for the Gulf Coast and the CDFI, Community Development Financial Institutions, money is really critical in a time of disaster.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Nemitz.

Mr. NEMITZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I am sure you have seen and you have read and you have heard, many organizations around this table—houses of worship, foodbanks, shelters, various places—have become first responders. And I think one of the things we need to understand or to get others at various levels to understand is that “first responders” does not necessarily mean police and fire. It has to be all of us around this table, and it has to be all those who are involved with disaster response recovery and long-term recovery.

Along that same line, though, there needs to be a level playing surface. When it comes to things like houses of worship, foodbanks, various buildings being allowed to apply to the SBA, the Small Business Administration, for disaster mitigation loans, nonprofit organizations are not allowed to apply.

However, if a foodbank is damaged or a house of worship is damaged after a storm, you can apply for a low-interest loan to rebuild. There is a little problem there. The logic escapes me on why organizations that are expected or by mandate are helping during times of disaster cannot improve their infrastructure, either with a generator, repairing their roof, reinforcing their building, to be there for the long haul to help State, Federal and local government officials.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Green.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Senator.

One of the concerns—and it has been stated already, but I want to emphasize it—is the need for waivers. As you probably know, in Arkansas, we have quite a few mobile homes that are still there that were designed to assist the evacuees to return home. A lot of the reason—and again, this goes to the communication issue—is that they cannot return because of different environmental concerns and code enforcement issues—and in some cases, even being on flood plains, the fact of replacing those mobile homes back on flood plains.

So from my perspective, if we are talking about a once in a lifetime—I am hoping it is a once in a lifetime situation with the devastation that was caused in New Orleans—we need to take extraordinary measures to make sure that these mobile homes are there for the people, the volunteers, whomever, so that they can be working.

The other concern that I have is that again, in some cases—because this is again a once in a lifetime situation—we are talking about people who are not going back home because, first of all, many of the persons who left, the evacuees, did not have resources or means to get out. Our hotels in Arkansas were filled, all the way from Little Rock to Fayetteville and portions of the communities bordering Louisiana.

There were fewer persons who were able to get out. The persons who were last to get out were the ones who were on buses or in airplanes or what-have-you who came to Arkansas and other States in the Union. A lot of those people are not coming back. They are going to stay in those respective communities. Services are still needed for them, and this again is one of the concerns that I have in a situation like this, because for once in a lifetime, you do not just stop temporarily after a disaster is over. This is ongoing. And again, from that perspective, there needs to be consideration given to those persons who are going to remain in these communities, because those persons who are there in a lot of cases have no resources.

What we have done in our State, again, is provided those resources through our processing, but we checked to make sure they needed medicine and what-have-you; that was done. But again, when those persons get into a community and reassociate themselves in our State—and we anticipate close to 4,000 or 5,000 people coming to Arkansas, saying in Arkansas—they have to have a way to maintain their livelihood and way to get back to providing for their families.

So we are looking for the opportunity for our Community Action Agencies and other nonprofit organizations to provide a way in which this can be accomplished. So there will have to be some type of resources available to those organizations that are not necessarily in New Orleans or in other parts of Mississippi. Those organizations are also going to need resources to address this problem.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Franklin.

Ms. FRANKLIN. I just want to piggyback on that just a little further, Mr. Chairman, to say that for those mobile homes that are in Arkansas—just to put a little pitch in so that nonprofits will have access to those units, because in Louisiana, there is lots of property that is not located in flood zones where those units could be used. We are talking about a housing crisis in the State of Louisiana. We talked about how we could get efficient housing quick and in a hurry for those persons who are in hotels or living multi-family where you have five or six families living in one unit together. That would be an ideal solution to the crisis, to remove restrictions and to have waivers where nonprofits and faith-based organizations who have the property and have the infrastructure can get those units and put them on the ground quickly.

It is an excellent, innovative idea for a housing crisis.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I am going to change the discussion slightly. This has been the best roundtable that I have attended. First of all, you have stayed below the time limits, and you have just been rapid-fire on ideas. I have a whole list, and I am going to have to go back through them, and I am sure we will have more questions regarding some of the poor notes that I took—not some of the things that you said. Fortunately, we have others taking notes, too. But I will say that this has been one of the best sessions for getting those things.

I want to move the discussion just a little bit to the National Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster, which has an important role in the national plan.

Do you have any comments on how VOAD can more effectively carry out its responsibilities.

Yes. You have been very silent, so I will call on you first.

ANDE MILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER

Ms. MILLER. Thank you.

I think that what you are addressing primarily is the role related to volunteer management, unaffiliated volunteers and unsolicited donations, because my members—Tom Hazelwood, Heather Feltman and Craig and others around here—addressed the piece in the plan regarding what services the voluntary organizations provide.

In the case of unaffiliated volunteers and unsolicited donations, our support is as part of the annex to FEMA and to their activity related to that on a national scale. But having said that, the responsibility for donations and volunteers falls to the States—and if you read that through, you can see how that activity occurred.

Now, we have all heard about the infrastructure in the affected States here, and to look at an expectation of a very quick ability to work with this massive amount of donations coming in would be a little short-sighted on our part.

But having said that, we are already moving forward. We are already moving forward with the support of FEMA on a sophisticated system of both telephone and technology so that we can begin to grab those calls, and when they call Tom Hazelwood's office and Heather Feltman's office, and then they call me and they call Jayne, that one person, we now know, will have called all five people instead of counting them as five calls.

So, will we be ready for this hurricane season? Craig Nemitz was talking about that last night. The fully-sophisticated set-up, no—but in terms of knowing what we need to activate the moment the first newscast has begun is our story, for a national call center of some kind.

The Points of Light Foundation, one of our members, has stepped forward and has significantly stepped forward to say that they too know that we need a national plan for dealing with incoming calls; that to put that on a State and on a local volunteer center in the early days of a catastrophic event or a significant event is unfair. So let us begin to hold onto those and use them appropriately.

Right now, in terms of donations, a big thing that we had was offers made in the first 24 to 48 hours, not needed then but desperately needed now that the excitement is over, and people are back to work in their regular scheme of things.

So, did we do what we wanted to do? No. Did we try? Yes. Do we know we can address this hurricane season much differently? Absolutely—faster and with much more forcefulness.

In closing on this particular topic, one of our challenges has been messages coming out at varying levels of government that are inconsistent with what works—meaning that to encourage people to

come on down, everyone, is not to ensure that organizations and places here have the people you need at the time you need them.

I am a firm believer that every person with their truck, collecting things across the country, truly believes they are the only person doing that. But there is nothing on the other end to say are those things necessary now; the quilted vest is not needed in July, but where is it now that we are in February, and it is needed?

So we are better, but those are all the things we still have to master.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Miller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDE MILLER

THE NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER (NATIONAL VOAD) A
BRIEF HISTORY

In the wake of Hurricane Camille's 1969 devastation of the Gulf Coast—it was obvious to voluntary organizations that they could better serve those affected by disaster through a more cooperative and coordinated approach. Seven of those organizations—7th-day Adventist Church, Southern Baptist Convention, Mennonite Disaster Service, St. Vincent De Paul Society, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the National Disaster Relief Office of the Roman Catholic Church and the American Red Cross—met in the ARC headquarters to begin a movement of communication, cooperation, coordination and collaboration among disaster response and relief organizations. All of these organizations came to the organizing table with decades of disaster relief history. Since the first meeting in 1970—the organization now counts 40 members (25 faith based and 15 humanitarian, nonprofit and/or community-based—member list attached) A membership funded organization the National VOAD continued as a volunteer staffed organization until the mid-1990's when a part-time executive secretary was appointed. A part-time Executive Director was appointed in September 2003 and became full-time in July 2005. Administrative support has been authorized and will be funded through the Points of Light Foundation, UPS/APCO Foundation and the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Hurricane Season 2005

In the summer of 2003 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) secured a seat in their Emergency Support Team (EST) Operations Center for the National VOAD. This seat is adjacent to Emergency Support Function (ESF) 6—Mass Care, ESF-11-Food (USDA), Donations Management and Recovery's Individual Assistance. We began staffing the EST during Hurricane Isabel, spent most of the late summer and fall in the EST for Hurricane Season 2004, participated in TOPOFF 3 from what is now the National Resource Coordination Center (NRCC)—same chair—same pod mates and reported to the NRCC on August 28 in anticipation of Hurricane Katrina. As we did during Hurricane Season 2004—on August 29 the National VOAD members began daily conference calls to share information, identify challenges, propose and accept solutions and start all over the next day. I've looked through all my notes and these seem to be the most representative of the first 3 months:

- CRWRC had no churches in the affected area and looked for a base church for their clean up and debris removal crews.
- Southern Baptist Convention/North American Mission Board agreements with the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army were activated to support mass feeding efforts. At the same time SBC mobilized clean up and debris removal crews; deployed laundry and shower trailers as well as mobile kitchens.
- Mercy Medical Airlift (the DHS HSEATS project and the disaster arm of Angel Flight) began moving disaster leadership and skilled workers for most of our members and other disaster groups.
- Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) provided birds eye view of Gulf Coast damage from a Mercy Med over flight—MDS brought Bayou La Batre, AL to our attention on day 2.
- United Jewish Communities provided updates on the UJF of New Orleans move to Houston as a result of significant damage to their offices, etc., and to support the New Orleans Jewish community that had relocated to the area.
- World Vision focused on warehousing and social services in the Dallas area.

- KatrinaHousing.org not only provided resources but also sought out the expertise of long time disaster providers to preclude some of the pitfalls of donated housing.

These are very few of the type of things we shared each day. Oftentimes the information sharing helped “fill in the map” to determine if affected areas were covered; sometimes a “new” group like Humanitarian International Services Group needed to be connected to the distribution systems in place through other voluntary organizations like America’s Second Harvest and local, State and Federal Government.

As time passed our calls grew to a peak of nearly 200 organizations—some of whom have expressed a desire to seek membership in National VOAD or the State VOAD where they are located.

All of our members responded in the affected States and in host States—now if I can just get them to share statistical information.

The more I type the more I have to say—Hope Coalition America is linked to MDS, FEMA and others providing financial counseling.

The Department of Labor—Workforce Investment Board—has been very forward moving in connecting with the voluntary organizations individually as appropriate and the Recovery Committees throughout the country. Jacqueline Halbig of the DOL office of faith based and community initiatives and Under Secretary Emily DiRocco have made themselves, their offices and staff available to organizations and committees to ensure that case managers are aware of the significant resources available.

The Rural Development Authority (USDA) was very responsive and we actually saw housing made available and used by evacuees.

As systems and structures and communication became more and more functioning in the affected states, our calls have been replaced with State VOAD meetings, Recovery Committees and other communication and cooperation activities.

The future:

- At all levels of government, the faith-based and community initiatives offices should accept the invitation to meet the VOAD in their jurisdiction.
- Government can support collaboration and coordination by inviting organizations to the planning and response table.
- Recognize the individuality of the member organizations but acknowledge their greater influence and strength united.
- Help ensure that the collaborations reflect the community population.
- The VOAD is usually under funded—host the meeting—help them take a breath.

National VOAD

- The National VOAD Board of Directors has agreed to develop a cadre to staff the FEMA NRCC.
- The National VOAD Board of Directors has developed a strategic plan for presentation to their members including inclusiveness, support to local and State VOAD development, and preparing for the threats in front of us—pandemic, etc.
- The National VOAD Board of Directors has authorized administrative support and National VOAD is now housed in an office building.
- May 9–12, 2006—14th Annual VOAD Conference, Raleigh, NC—committees will focus on Hurricane Season 2006—Mass Care, Emotional and Spiritual Care, Recovery, Communications, Public Policy, Volunteer Management, Donations Management.

Members

1. Adventist Community Services
2. America’s Second Harvest
3. American Baptist Churches USA
4. American Disaster Reserve
5. American Radio Relay League (ARRL, National Association for Amateur Radio)
6. American Red Cross
7. AMURT (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team)
8. Catholic Charities USA
9. Christian Disaster Response International
10. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)
11. Church of the Brethren—Emergency Response/Service Ministries
12. Church World Service
13. Convoy of Hope
14. Disaster Psychiatry Outreach
15. The Episcopal Church
16. Friends Disaster Service, Inc.
17. The Humane Society of the United States

18. International Aid
19. International Critical Incident Stress Foundation
20. International Relief Friendship Foundation
21. Lutheran Disaster Response
22. Mennonite Disaster Service
23. Mercy Medical Airlift
24. National Emergency Response Teams (NERT)
25. National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)
26. Nazarene Disaster Response
27. Northwest Medical Teams International
28. The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors
29. The Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network
30. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
31. REACT International, Inc.
32. The Salvation Army
33. Society of St. Vincent de Paul
34. Southern Baptist Convention—North American Mission Board
35. United Jewish Communities
36. United Church of Christ—Wider Church Ministries
37. United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)
38. United Way of America
39. Volunteers of America
40. World Vision

Government Partners

41. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
42. Citizen Corp/Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Private Partners

43. Center for International Disaster Information (formerly Volunteers in Technical Assistance)

NVOAD AGENCIES Disaster Roles

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
Adventist Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides multi-step training to equip volunteers to effectively respond to disasters -Courses include disaster preparedness, donation and warehouse management and crisis care counseling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Operates collection sites, distribution centers and warehouses to coordinate allocation of relief supplies to victims and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ascertains needs of disaster victims -Solicits donations -Operates distribution sites -Manages warehouses where donated goods are sorted, packaged, and stored for distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Deploys volunteers for disaster response -Provides emotional, spiritual and crisis care counseling to victims, their families and communities -Operates warehouses where donated goods are coordinated to support the work of other NVOAD agencies
American Baptist Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide training for 11 response teams on the use of equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine the ABM response for Federally declared and undeclared disasters -Recruit volunteers for response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When FEMA requests ABM acts as the Coordinating body for all Faith-based Organizations and Volunteer Groups -Provides debris removal, clean up and mud outs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -OGHS funds may be available through National Disaster Office -Skilled volunteers available for building projects
American Disaster Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operates an online Internet facility, The Virtual Emergency Operations Center, for disaster exercises - Supported agencies may be local governments, Community and State VOADs and NVOAD member agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operates The Virtual Emergency Operations Center to gather, evaluate, and disseminate situation information; issue and track mission taskings; track resource status; prepare reports; and forward SITREPs to the NVOAD listserv for supported agencies - Provides trained resource management staffing teams to assist in operations of emergency operations centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operates The Virtual Emergency Operations Center to gather, evaluate, and disseminate situation information; issue and track mission taskings; track resource status; prepare reports; and forward SITREPs to the NVOAD listserv for supported agencies - Provides trained resource management staffing teams to assist in operations of emergency operations centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operates The Virtual Emergency Operations Center to gather, evaluate, and disseminate situation information; issue and track mission taskings; track resource status; prepare reports; and forward SITREPs to the NVOAD listserv for supported agencies
American Radio Relay League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Volunteer ham radio operators practice year round, and run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide volunteer radio communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ham radio operators stay on-site handling emergency 	

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
	simulations on handling emergency communications. They take courses on handling emergency communications	services to Federal, State, county, local government, and voluntary agencies for the disaster	communications until normal communications are back to normal - To help first responders, ham radio operators "shadow" first responders who may not be able to communicate with one another	
American Red Cross	- Community Disaster Education	- Shelter - Mass feeding	-Fixed/mobile feeding - Cleaning supplies - Comfort kits - First Aid - Food and clothing - Transportation - Medical supplies - Disaster Mental Health	- Rent - Home repairs - Household items - Short Term Counseling
America's Second Harvest	- Collects, transports, warehouses and distributes donated food and grocery items for other VOLAG's - Educates the public about the problems and solutions of hunger	- Assists local Food Banks with national resources		- Develops, certifies and supports local food banks
Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team	- Disaster services training in conjunction with other VOLAG's	-Volunteers for initial survey -Initial response in shelters	- Medical care - Food and clothing distribution - CISD	-CISD and medical services as required
Catholic Charities, USA	- Local church preparedness training, collaboration building		- Convene local church groups for purposes of collaboration, mitigation, and resource sharing - Relief grants to supplement local response endeavors and to facilitate beginning the long-term recovery process	- Crisis and recovery needs for local families - Temporary housing assistance for low income families - Counseling programs for children and elderly - Special Counseling services for Disaster Workers

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
Christian Disaster Response	-Providing training for churches, community organizations and volunteers	- Disaster assessments and support to local churches	- Facilities for fixed/mobile feeding - Facilities for In-Kind disaster relief supplies and Spiritual Care and support	-Coordinates collection of donated goods -Needs Assessment / Case Work support
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee	- Training volunteers and churches		- Clean-up - Emotional and spiritual care	- Organizational capacity building - Needs assessment - Construction estimating - Housing repair and construction - Emotional and spiritual care
Church of the Brethren	- Training of volunteer leadership - Education: children and trauma	-Critical Response Childcare working with American Red Cross	- Clean-up and debris removal - Disaster Child Care	- Home repair and rebuilding
Church World Service	- Training faith-based and community groups in preparedness and mitigation	- Disaster Assessments	- Convene local churches to assist in coordinating response - Material Resources such as blankets, health kits, and clean up kits	- Disaster Response and Recovery Liaisons convene local churches and religious organizations to form community long term recovery structures
Disaster Psychiatry Outreach	-Establish community relations -Train volunteers Prepare materials and response kits	-Consulting with health and mental health agencies and emergency management officials	-Immediate, on-site care and community outreach -Referrals for ongoing care	-On-site interventions and transition to long-term care
Episcopal Relief and Development			-Relief grants for basics (food, water, medical, financial)	-Rehabilitation grants for rebuilding, replanting -Counseling
Friends Disaster Service	-Strengthening our own agency to better respond, by recruiting and training new volunteers	-To assist victims with cleanup and rebuild	-FDS mission is not geared nor trained to respond to immediate emergencies	-Trained volunteers respond with cleanup and rebuild assistance, both short and long term

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
Humane Society of the United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with federal, state, and local govt., and private organizations to promote complete disaster planning that includes animals (all phases – see "impact") and to deliver to the public a clear and correct message about safe and effective actions for animals in disaster - Providing animal disaster response training to govt. and other organizations as well as to our own Disaster Animal Response Team volunteers and staff nationwide - Technical support and advice to agencies and the public for all animal issues in disaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evacuation support for people with pets, horses, livestock, and other animals - Search and rescue for animals - First aid, triage, and health assessment of affected animals - Emergency sheltering of animals and people with animals during disaster - Donation Management - Volunteer management - Damage and needs assessment for animals - Procurement and distribution of animal food, hay, supplies, and equipment. 	Same as "impact"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise agencies, communities, and the public on animal needs after the event: health, animal food and other supplies, contact with appropriate agencies for other needs, etc.
International Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Volunteer Training -Collect, receive, warehouse, and distribute donated products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Food, personal hygiene, and medical supplies -Disaster Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transportation -Logistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clean up -Home repair -Trauma Counseling
International Critical Incident Stress Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training -Education -Consultation -Collaboration -Continuing Education -Stress Management / Resiliency Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prevention and mitigation of disabling stress through the provision of training and support services for all Emergency Services and the helping professions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consultation in the establishment of Crisis and Disaster Response Plans/Programs -Coordination of Collaborative Response -Mental Health Referral Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mental Health Referral Resources -Training -Education -Consultation -Collaboration
International Relief Friendship Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training volunteers from faith-based organizations, community groups and churches to respond and be prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In kind supplies -Emotional & Spiritual care -Volunteer management and support for cleanup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emotional and Spiritual care -Case management -Create support network among volunteer organizations

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
Lutheran Disaster Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparedness planning for congregations, judicatories, and agencies - Coordination of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelter, feeding, assessments - Organizational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteer Management - Clean-up volunteers - Emotional and Spiritual Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repair and rebuilding by skilled and semi-skilled volunteers - Emotional and spiritual care - Programs for traumatized children - Case Management - Special emphasis on vulnerable populations
Mennonite Disaster Service			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clean-up and debris removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repair and rebuilding by skilled volunteers - Special emphasis on elderly, handicapped
Mercy Medical Airlift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pre-planned Homeland Security Emergency Air Transportation System (HSEATS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long-distance transportation for small priority cargo and key personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flying in key personnel and special small equipment and high priority supplies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Logistical support when ground or commercial transportation is not available.
National Emergency Response Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobile teaching units for educational programs for children - Educational Emergency Preparedness Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food, clothing, shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency Mobile Trailer Units (self contained living units for 8-10 people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Carpentry crews-repairs/building -Certified forklift operators
National Organization for Victim Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training for individuals and organizations on understanding trauma and developing community crisis response teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Early psychological intervention and spiritual care; referrals to disaster mental health as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Early psychological intervention and spiritual care; referrals to disaster mental health as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term planning for mental health needs; developing database of local providers
Nazarene Disaster Response			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clean-up and debris removal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rebuilding assistance - National Crisis Counseling Coordination in emotional and spiritual care

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
Northwest Medical Teams International			- Enlists volunteers to support VOLAG activities	-Trauma counseling in disaster - Economic support for clean-up and reconstruction
Phoenix Society For Burn Survivors	Burn Injury Specific -Training -Education -Consultation -Collaboration -Continuing Education	-Promoting the long-term emotional healing from burn trauma through the delivery of training and support services for those helping professions and directly to the survivors and families when appropriate.	-Consultation in the establishment of – Burn Specific -Plans/Programs -Coordination of Collaborative Response to burn trauma -Mental Health Care Provider Resources	-Training -Education -Consultation -Collaboration -Mental Health Care Resources
The Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network	- Supports and trains volunteers in mitigation and preparedness activities through a network of 400 Volunteer Centers located in communities throughout the country.	- Varies by each community but includes: donations, volunteer management	-Many Volunteer Centers have the capacity to coordinate unaffiliated volunteers in response activities. -Local Volunteer Center can be found by dialing 1-800-VOLUNTEER	-The management of unaffiliated volunteers in Recovery efforts -Innovative donations management strategies Coordination of the network to help communities recover faster
Presbyterian Church (USA)	- Training Judicatories in disaster preparedness and response - Support for Church World Service Training Program	- Food and shelter in cooperation with American Red Cross	- Supports Cooperative Disaster Childcare with volunteer workers - Volunteers for clean-up and debris removal - Members of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team help organize the faith community	- Financial Resources - Volunteer Labor - Material Assistance - Spiritual and Pastoral Care
REACT International	-Provides emergency communications training	-Provides volunteer radio services to Federal, State, County, and Local Govt. and Voluntary Agencies at a local level	- Emergency communications for VOLAG's	
Society of St Vincent DePaul	- Provides social services			- Grants for food, housing & repairs

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
				- Collects and distributes donated goods
Southern Baptist Convention	- Training volunteers in conjunction with other VOLAG's	- Chain saw crews for debris removal	- Provides mobile feeding units for preparation & distribution of thousands of meals per day - Provides disaster childcare - Clean-up activities - Mud outs - Chainsaw Crews - Chaplains	- Reconstruction assistance - Counseling - Bilingual services
The Salvation Army	- Comprehensive national training program for volunteers and SA personnel - maintain personnel & equipment readiness/ response capabilities at local centers of operations - distribution of disaster preparedness literature to family households & community organizations - maintains local, divisional, territorial, and national Emergency Preparedness Manuals	Mass Care Services - Shelter - Mass feeding fixed sites - Mobile feeding - Emotional & Spiritual Support	Mass Care Services - Mass feeding - Temporary shelters - Receiving & distribution centers -- food & personal essentials - Home Recovery Teams - Emergency Social Services (financial grants, food, clothing, medications, etc. - Spiritual care, chaplains	- Receiving & distribution centers- food, personal essentials, household items, donated building supplies, etc. - Counseling - Case management services - Spiritual care, chaplains
United Jewish Communities	- Created Emergency Preparedness Manual - Provides Emergency Preparedness Expertise	- Coordinates a system of central fundraising and planning for 169 federations that operate a system of social service, recreational and educational institutions that respond in the event of an emergency - Manages a National Alert System	- Professional/ Volunteer Management - Spiritual and Emotional Care - Kosher Food - Shelter - Counseling – Mental Health - Deploy Volunteers (if necessary)	- Spiritual and Emotional Care - Limited Financial Assistance - Collect and Distribute Donated Goods

Resource	Preparedness	Impact	Emergency	Recovery
United Methodist Committee on Relief	- Training volunteers - Preparedness training for local congregations and judicatories	- Organizational skills	- Volunteer management - Volunteer teams for cleanup - Information and referral training	- Spiritual and emotional care to disaster victims - Long-term care for children impacted by disaster - Repair and rebuilding assistance - Case Management training
Volunteers in Technical Assistance			-Provides telecommunications and information management systems support to emergency management community	
Volunteers of America				- Collects and distributes donated goods -Provides mental health care
World Vision				- Collects, manages and distributes donated goods

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Wright.

Ms. WRIGHT. I just want to offer a hearty “Amen” on the messages coming out from various levels of government—and I have made the same comment to our State government as well in respect to calling for volunteers.

The search and rescue operations that were going on in New Orleans, and our government’s calls for people with boats to come down—this is just an example—and then the people who were coordinating search and rescue on the State level consistently told me, “No, we do not want volunteers.” But our own government is calling for volunteers, and they are all calling me.

It was a very difficult spot to be in, so a national call center for volunteers, I would echo that that would be a tremendous help to the person who is getting calls all night long, and people are very frustrated because they wanted to help and wanted to find a place to do that and were responding to the very calls from the government, but then, on my end, when I tried to get those folks linked up to those agencies and was being told “No,” it was a very bad situation.

On donation coordination, again, the call center would be effective. We set up a call center, but it was days into it, and in the initial few days, we were just overwhelmed. The system, the technology, was overwhelmed, but then, from a people standpoint as well, we were just overwhelmed with calls. So that would be fantastic.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Nemitz.

Mr. NEMITZ. Ande's comments about the national VOAD and their roles and responsibilities as far as the national response plan is concerned—I would say that Ande in her capacity as executive director for national VOAD did a fantastic job during the Katrina-Rita-Wilma nightmare that we all lived through.

I think part of the problem, though, is that the national response plan is not necessarily understood at the State level, that we have people in emergency management who work for various governors' offices who do not get it, and they think: "Oh, I need to start asking for donations."

Our task with national VOAD for many years has been to get the message out that we do not need truckloads of stuff—and that acronym is "Supplies that are useless to frantic folks"—we do not need winter blankets coming down to New Orleans in August. Yes, we will need them in February or January, but we do not need them day one, item one, in August.

We do not need the church groups—and I apologize for putting it in those terms—but I received phone calls from the church ladies in Spokane, WA who are knitting booties for rescue dogs. We do not really need to send a truckload of knitted booties down to New Orleans for the rescue dogs.

There is example after example after example, and we work very hard to try to get the message out—cash is the best donation to voluntary organizations, be it faith-based groups, the Red Cross, America's Second Harvest, the Salvation Army. The problem we run into, then, is that the governors' offices also set up their own funds where they are competing with us for dollars. That does not help us complete our mission.

And when you look at bigger things such as the Bush-Clinton Fund, no CEO in the world is going to turn down a former President knocking at his door, asking for a donation—but they are sure going to turn me away when I knock on the door. There are only so many pieces of the pie for voluntary organizations to take donations.

So any help that you can give in getting governors to understand that there is a plan in place, let the plan work, would be helpful.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Green.

Mr. GREEN. I agree with the challenge that you have in a situation such as this. One of the things that happened in this situation was that there was no communication. The communication system was down. You heard all kinds of misinformation from relatives—and I had friends who were there who called me, just like I am sure a lot of other people did, trying to get out.

You look at the media, and the media is your only source of information—right or wrong, it is your source of information. You see people screaming, asking for help; no help is being provided. What are you going to do? As an individual, you are going to try to provide help. And that is what happened. People were trying to provide help.

The challenge for us is communication. Now, whatever we say, people are going to respond one way or another. They are going to provide. We had folks from Arkansas who provided help for the animals. We still have animals in Arkansas without people; we do

not know where they are. They are there. Their dogs and pits are there because people in Arkansas did not want those animals to be put to death.

So you have all this need, and you have situation, and the challenge, again, is going to be how do you communicate this information. Do you have the networks coordinate their information through one central source? I do not think that is going to happen, but that would be a good idea. But the challenge again is for organizations at the local level, if you can do that, to try to coordinate. That is going to be the biggest challenge—trying to coordinate and get the communication that is needed.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Wilkins.

Ms. WILKINS. I would like to comment on what Ms. Miller said about the VOAD and now, 6 months later, give you a perspective from New Orleans.

We continue to feed hot meals 6 months after the disaster to people in the New Orleans area—Saint Bernard and the Plaquemines area—who were affected by Katrina. A year ago, we participated in an exercise called “Hurricane Pam,” in which we thought we had envisioned the worst-case scenario that could happen to New Orleans. We were wrong. Katrina certainly proved that.

But I am thinking that maybe a suggestion going forward is that within the time line, we always think about a disaster as being a short-term response. Katrina’s response, Rita’s response, is certainly very long-term. Now there are certainly—if we were getting calls from people who wanted to donate food items or wanted to donate household goods, clean-up items, we would be most appreciative, because we are out in the communities now distributing those. And as Ande mentioned, the people who were offering during those first 3 weeks when they saw those TV spots—and the media was helping show the pictures of New Orleans—are not calling now. So maybe as we look forward in planning, we can also plan out some kind of project time line where we capture someone in those first 3 weeks, but we get back to them 3 months later to make sure that their donation and their offer of help can still be forthcoming.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I would mention that they have called the vote now, and when we see a few more lights appear up there, Senator Isakson and I will have to leave and go vote.

Before we do that, I do want to again express my appreciation to all of you who have participated in this. We have gotten just a tremendous number of messages from this. Some of the things, I hope we have already included in some of the legislation, but I will go back and check to make sure that we have—the medical licensure and perhaps some of the liability things.

Somebody did suggest to me—we had a little incident in Wright, and they had the same problem; they had people shipping stuff there from all over the country, and they did not have anyplace to put it, hang it up, sort it, and get it out to the people who needed it. And somebody came up with the idea of having—well, another problem we found was registering people. They did not realize they had to register when there is a disaster so that they can be put in contact with people who can provide for their needs later, includ-

ing the Small Business Administration and others. So I do appreciate the community-based organizations that helped get the word out down there. We were constantly mentioning that people needed to register, because they were all over the country. That got done, but it led a person to give us an idea that we needed to have a Web site that would be by town and by individual that would work like a Christmas angel, where people could pick a family and fill some of their needs and remove them from the list and get some coordination that way. A couple of Wyoming towns adopted towns in the Katrina-Rita area, found out what their needs were, and then hauled the stuff down there. Of course, that was 2 to 4 weeks after the disaster, when there was some communication and people could know that sort of thing.

So there are some ideas out there, and my thanks really goes out to you for the way that all of you pitched in and handled all of these problems which, because it was the biggest series of natural disasters that we have ever had in this country, I do not know that anybody could foresee that—of course, hindsight really helps, and that is what we are doing now is hindsight, so that it will be foresight for the next time. And your help and expertise is just really appreciated.

We will, as I said, leave the record open so that you can continue to feed ideas to us as you have them or you are in contact with other people who have them, and we will make use of them—and if it does not come under the jurisdiction of our committee, we will share it with other committees. This is really helpful.

Ms. Fagnoni, would you take over for me here and continue the discussion? And again I will apologize that we have a vote. The lights are up there, and that means we have just a couple of minutes to get over there and vote.

My thanks to you for all of this help.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

As Senator Enzi said, all of your comments are being recorded, so please be assured that even though the Senators had to leave, the information going forward will be of great use to the committee and staff.

OK, I have the order now. Ms. Feltman?

Ms. FELTMAN. Thank you.

I just wanted to add to the discussion of VOAD that I think as we move forward in addressing the large-scale response to these disasters, the membership of VOAD continues to grow in its expertise and its learning, and there is huge value in that, in the level of competency.

In addition to that, I just want to go on the record that as we move into the long-term recovery, the State VOAD system is highly important for those other organizations, the community organizations, those that may not sit at the national table of VOAD but are huge community investors who really need to be at those tables, and they are of high value. So the more we can build that infrastructure of the State-level VOADs, or even county-level, or however we organize that, it is going to be crucial. So, thank you.

Ms. FAGNONI. Ms. Bourg.

Ms. BOURG. I guess I am a fiscal conservative, so I am really interested in prevention. You cannot stop hurricanes. Louisiana and

Texas have the most hurricanes after Florida, which has the most hurricanes that hit. So I think we are going to be seeing, as I understand it, a lot more of these.

I am concerned, really, about two things. One, along the coast of Louisiana, we have so much of our Nation's energy infrastructure, and we really need to look at building up the coastal barrier islands all along the coast if we are going to not have to use the rest of my lifetime and many other people's lives in responding to the disasters at such a level. With that first ounce of prevention there, we would see a lot less damage than we have seen particularly from Rita, with the surge.

Second, I think we need to have infrastructure in place, so I really believe that our Nation needs to do more to incentivize philanthropy toward building the capacity of Community Development Corporations. We have that for our great universities and our museums and our hospitals, which are wonderful structures that we need in our civilized communities, but we need better capacity to respond to this in our Community Development Corporations in our communities.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Hawks.

Mr. HAWKS. Thank you.

I would like to make a comment that relates to VOAD and VOAD's role and perhaps the government's role as it relates to, again, exercises and training, as well as educating the public on in-kind gifts.

I think that with the influx of all of the different organizations that are trying to help during the Katrina-Rita effort, there are a lot of folks who came into the impacted areas who had very little experience. And you would try to take those undesignated or unaffiliated volunteers, and you would try to plug them in—and now we are talking about not having room for them to even stay as they want to come now, when they are desperately needed.

I think that VOAD as well as the Government plays a very important role in the ongoing training of the organizations as well as the individuals. There are some courses in disaster training that some of the organizations around the table here do extremely well, and those are your strengths. I think that VOAD could come up with a cadre of training materials for the organizations, federally as well as statewide, and then push them down locally.

I know that one of the lessons learned as it relates to the White House is that in the funding that is being pushed down to the State and local levels, the NGOs be included in the training and the exercises.

The other thing is the education process. I do not know if the Federal Government could orchestrate some kind of PSA ad campaign that involves a number of the organizations that are involved during the course of a disaster, illustrating sometimes the piles of debris that are left there and unloaded when you cannot utilize them, just giving some visible illustrations and some education, not just in response to a disaster but prior to. This is year-around education that we need.

Thank you.

**CYNTHIA FAGNONI, DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION, WORKFORCE
AND INCOME SECURITY ISSUES, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNT-
ABILITY OFFICE (GAO)**

Ms. FAGNONI. Our team was lucky enough to be in Biloxi, talking to the Salvation Army representative down there, and it really hit home, talking directly to somebody, hearing about how the most difficult commodities to get are used clothing. I think all feel like we want to help, but listening and hearing about how problematic that can be was very helpful to hear.

Thank you.

Ms. Franklin.

Ms. FRANKLIN. Thank you.

I want to talk a bit about the volunteers and the call out for volunteers. When we sent an SOS out to the Community Services Block Grant, we were specific about what we needed in terms of food and clothing, down to baby clothes and what size Pampers we needed—because we did not want to have waste coming through our network. Our network responded in kind, and we got all the things that we needed, and they were all useful things. But I want to say that the California jurisdiction of the Church of God and Christ as an answer to that call came down with specialists, including doctors and psychologists and nurses. And the local hospital, Franklin Foundation Hospital, used the second floor of the hospital to house all those specialists. They fed them and took care of them, and they stayed with us for 3 weeks, going into the shelters, taking care of the people who needed that care.

And I just want to say that that is the kind of thing that we are going to have to be looking at as we talk about volunteers and who comes into our local communities—not just having people come there just to be there.

Also, we had people who had boats who volunteered to go into New Orleans to get people out, who were turned around. Many of those people wound up dying in houses or on rooftops because they were not able to get in to do that work. I just think that is something else that we need to look at as we start to develop these policies.

Finally, I want to say that as we talk about long-term recovery, we look at the CDBG dollars and tax credits and home moneys going to community-based groups and to assist CDBG units and to the Community Action Agency and other nonprofits, especially faith-based organizations, to do this work that needs to be done to help these families become whole again.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Mahboob.

Mr. MAHBOOB. I just wanted to emphasize the area of long-term development and assistance. What happens most of the time, I think we all see that this happens with donors and the population that sees the need on TV and want to help out, but unfortunately, relief organizations run into the same problem where, in the beginning, you get a lot of supplies and aid, but later on, it does not come when it is needed, when people need it most.

I think that is an area that we need to emphasize.

What also happens when you are down there giving aid to the local community is that they become dependent on you, and when

you leave, they are just left out in the open. One way we need to deal with that is to, in our relief efforts, include the local population and empower them as well, so that by the time we leave, they know what is going on, and they can take charge of the operations we have started or they can help rebuild their communities and get back on their feet.

Another way to deal with it—for example, our organization and every other organization has limits on its resources and the amount of time it can spend in a disaster area—is to help fund these other local organizations and NGOs, as has been mentioned, so they can carry on the work longer in the disaster-affected areas.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Gaddy.

Mr. GADDY. Just one observation in response to two or three things I have heard this morning about disasters being a time to suspend policies to increase the flow of governmental money into various agencies, even into faith-based agencies.

One of the points that I made in the first statement was that one reason we got enthusiastic and compassionate care from faith-based communities, particularly houses of worship, was because they were acting out of their compassion, out of their religious conviction.

A disaster is not a time to violate the first amendment to the Constitution and have government supporting overt faith-based activities. That money there within houses of worship. We talked with houses of worship all over Baton Rouge and the area about that. I think it is time, before the crisis, to establish the policy that in the midst of a crisis, we will not give up on something that has served religion so well in this Nation since the first amendment to the Constitution. Rather, if we protect that, we will multiply over and over, in the most religiously pluralistic Nation in the world, more volunteers from more diverse religious communities that will do their work according to the dictates of their conscience and with the rhetoric of their own tradition.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Miller.

Ms. MILLER. Thank you.

I think it is important to note, and I think everyone around the table knows it, that VOAD is a philosophy, it is a principle. It is not a thing. It is a group of organizations that came together a long, long time ago, who had been doing disaster work for decades before that and said we can do that. Each major event, as Heather brought up earlier, looks at the membership, but the key to it is that it is a focus on bringing a great number of community- and faith-based groups together for one purpose, and that is the focus of disaster response, relief and recovery. And then, the difference that occur otherwise do fall away for the purpose of doing this, but the organization piece is that they all know what each other are doing. That is the start to how the response occurs in an organized manner, quickly.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Hazelwood.

Mr. HAZELWOOD. I want to echo a little more of what Ande Miller said a few moments ago about the coordination, particularly of un-

solicited volunteers. Many of our organizations deal with volunteers every day. My own particular organization puts 300,000 volunteers a year in the field, and other colleagues around the table have similar numbers. So, managing volunteers is not a new phenomenon to any of us. But when you have an event that is as large as Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and all those that hit us this year, the influx of new volunteers can be overwhelming.

So the whole point of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster is for us to be able to coordinate all of that, all of the influx of volunteers, and we have had organizations like Points of Light who are members of the national VOAD say that they will begin to work with us and to organize in a way that helps channel those unsolicited volunteers.

I think that where the frustration comes for many of us is at times from the government level, when the Government seems to think that we do not know how to manage the volunteers and want to offer their own solutions without ever talking to us first. Sometimes, we know how to do it, but we just lack the resource maybe to get it done, and what we need are some extra resources to be able to manage what we already know how to do.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Wilkins.

Ms. WILKINS. Thank you.

I did not want to leave here today without bringing up another crisis that I see in the making, and it was alluded to earlier in some of the first conversations we had. That is that we have a fragile population in New Orleans who are on an emotional roller-coaster. As we approach hurricane seasons, less than 90 days out, I wonder what is going to happen the first time a tropical storm is headed anywhere near the United States, whether it is toward Florida or, as you have pointed out, Louisiana or Texas.

I am very concerned about our population. I think it is going to take resource not only at the local level, but it is going to take some State coordination and some Federal coordination to really look at what the emotional fallout could be and will be.

You have talked about FEMA villages being very sterile environments. I have 15 staff members who lost their homes because of Katrina. I watch this being played out every day in some way with someone who is on that emotional roller-coaster, and I am very concerned, because support systems that were there for last year's hurricane season are not there this year.

So I think if we talk about VOAD, there are some other resources that we can bring in, and we probably should start looking at that right now, both at the national, State and local levels.

Ms. FAGNONI. Actually, since I do not see anymore name tags up, I would like to cover the third piece that the committee is interested in.

I am sorry, I did not see you. Go ahead, Mr. Daroff.

Mr. DAROFF. I wanted to echo what Ms. Wilkins just said. One thing that struck us when we were down there is that everyone has a story—every rescuer, every doctor, every social worker, every evacuee. People who are there helping folks now deal with the crisis have their own crises that they are dealing with and have dealt with, and that infrastructure is tender, and it is really amazing to

see these folks, the counselors, the psychiatrists, who are telling their patients their own problems while they are hearing the problems from their patients—because they too had to swim out of their houses or had to wear borrowed boxer shorts.

One thing I also wanted to mention in reaction to Mr. Gaddy's comments is that certainly, church-state considerations need to be paramount, and there needs to be a real consideration for the first amendment. But I think there is also a need for a common-sense approach when we are in the midst of a crisis. In New Orleans particularly, a massive percentage of kids in parochial schools were dispersed throughout the country in other parochial schools and Jewish day schools and other religious schools. And the Congress, in I think an enlightened sense, saw the need to approve the reimbursement of funds for kids who are in religious schools. I think that common-sense approaches like that, that help out even institutions that are pervasively religious are a worthwhile step.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

To the third question, which I know we have covered quite a bit, but I just want to give any of you, each of you, an opportunity to share any final insights—that is, thinking about how the different levels of government, in particular local/State/Federal, could better structure its approach to disaster relief to better enable community-based groups to do what they do best.

Mr. NEMITZ.

Mr. NEMITZ. One of the points—and this is in my written submission, too—is that by virtue of how my network of foodbanks, America's Second Harvest, we work not only state-to-state, we cover all 50 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. And my perspective, working at the national office in Chicago allows me to work with various States. I have been to Texas, I have been to Louisiana, I have been to Arkansas. In 2004, I was about 3 days short of being eligible to vote in Florida because I was down there so much. So you get to see what works and what does not. And one issue that I think could be very helpful to nonprofit organizations would be some semblance of sameness working with National Guard units.

In the State of Mississippi, the foodbanks had wonderful support. It made sense. We had the food; they had the vehicles and the personnel to get into areas. Roads were closed, trees were down, and they got the food out there. It was a great idea.

In the great State of Texas, though, the standing orders for the National Guard were that they could not transport any product that came from a nonprofit organization. So there are some things that can be done—and I realize the National Guard is a State entity, but there is a national office for the National Guard in D.C.—if we could get some help working with the military end of the response for what resources they could bring to the table, I think that would be very helpful for a lot of us to get our work done.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GREEN. I may have actually said it first. I agree that the National Guard plays a prominent role. I was fortunate in that I happened to be at the Capital when the Governor put the call out for all of the State agencies to do what they were going to do. Our na-

tional parks looked at the parks available; looked at the hotels—we had an existing web base for every person who was coming into the State. We looked at the situation where we were going to notify people about the available resources. Either the local county offices or the National Guard Armory was the site to be used.

It is critical when you have situations like this that all players are involved, and it is important from the standpoint that the Governor's office, the country judge's office or parish jurisdiction—whoever—are involved, because all have an important role in trying to disseminate information and coordinate resources.

As a State employee, I feel fortunate that we have a network that is recognized in our State that can provide those services at the local level. A lot of times, they are the lead agencies in the respective communities, and it is important that all these organizations—and the faith-based organizations are encouraged to be a part of that process. I think that is the key that you have to look at, is making sure that those processes are available.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Wright.

Ms. WRIGHT. Thanks.

With regard to how government can work better with voluntary agencies, I think the first key to that is that all levels of government, whether Federal, State or local, and all the components of that educate themselves first of all as to what the plan is. Knowing what your State plan is and knowing how things happen is critical during a time like this.

In our situation, we had lots of folks who, as Craig said earlier, just simply did not get it and started other processes outside of where the plan already made provisions—donations coordination, call for volunteers—those things were already in place, yet they created additional avenues for that to happen, and it is confusing for the public when they want to help, and it is also confusing for people within the Government who are trying to work in the situation—do I work with the Governor's office, or do I work with what the donations plan calls for? It is very difficult in the middle of such a chaotic situation already to have dual systems operating. So that would be the first thing.

Then, for the entities, whether they are State, local, or Federal, to work with the voluntary agencies in the planning process and making sure they understand that the voluntary agencies are there to support them in a variety of the ESF functions.

Thank you.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Franklin.

Ms. FRANKLIN. I still think we need to look at developing a national disaster response plan and that that plan needs to be developed heavily around the community-based groups, around the CSBG groups, around the other community development organizations, and around the faith-based organizations. We do need to include government and Homeland Security, the Office of Emergency Preparedness. They should all come to the table, but the lead entities should be the people who are actually doing that work on the ground.

The other thing is I think that whole plan needs to be driven by the three big C's—communication, coordination, cooperation.

Thank you.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Bourg.

Ms. BOURG. Right after Hurricane Katrina, I spent about 10 hours in a helicopter, landing in all the little rural villages and settlements and towns that I could. And one thing I noticed was a National Guard presence everywhere, guarding basically nothing, because there was nothing left to guard. Our hospitals and our clinics were gone. Our schools were gutted.

So I guess I am just slow in understanding this, but if we have our National Guard rebuilding, thank goodness, parts of Iraq, with schools and roads and clinics, why can't our National Guard not be back in Vermilion Parish and in New Cameron Parish, helping to rebuild our roads and our schools and our clinics? I do not get it in America. I just do not understand it.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Hawks.

Mr. HAWKS. From my standpoint of working with the Salvation Army, I think the Federal Government—and we have talked about it, and again, this is a good step in the right direction today, including the NGO community in the revision of the national plan and in State plans and local plans; that at whatever level, NGOs be included; that perhaps the Government could take a closer look at the ESF-6 particularly and their role. What happens if there are a couple of catastrophic activities on the different sides of the country, and how do we respond as national organizations to events like that?

As has already been mentioned, I think the Government has a real role in education, in the public as it relates to gifts-in-kind and the use of donations, and also in the training of NGOs. I was thinking in terms of the Incident Command Training Program, as an example, that all of us for the most part are in agreement that that is a good model for exercising leadership during a time of disaster; that perhaps the Government could assist with the Incident Command Training.

Second, we talked about the VAL positions earlier. Perhaps that VAL position, if it were strengthened and empowered, could help link the Federal, the State, and the local governments, if it were given a little more latitude as it relates to coordinating the NGOs and the volunteer agencies—because from the Salvation Army's standpoint, the VAL positions have been very, very helpful, and the idea of having them as permanent employees as opposed to rotating is also a good idea from a relational standpoint.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Mahboob.

Mr. MAHBOOB. One thing we did in East Biloxi—there was only one local community clinic which was totally damaged in Katrina—we bought a mobile home, and where the Government came in to help in that area was that the city basically expedited the donation of the land, and that is where we placed the mobile clinic—basically, it was a mobile home that was converted into a clinic—and that is still ongoing and operating in the local area consistently.

That is one area where government can help, and as was mentioned, sometimes organizations could not get into areas because of security and the checkpoint set-up. Special access is required. So agencies that are predesignated to have that kind of permission to go into certain areas where they can help deliver aid faster, or even sometimes, for some agencies like ourselves, when we want to show pictures to our donors to really see what is going on on the ground, when they see the more dramatic pictures, they are more likely to donate more. Unfortunately, sometimes, that is what it takes.

The last suggestion I would make is that if there are aid organizations on the ground that are really doing something well, and they have been doing it for a while, that instead of going in there and starting another operation, to just support those local agencies and provide the assistance that they need.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Wilkins.

Ms. WILKINS. In Southeast Louisiana now, there are many long-term recovery committee meetings that are being held. They go by different names. It is sometimes called "long-term recovery," sometimes it is called "unmet needs," but all have a specific purpose, and that is looking at the community and helping to figure out the best way to help the people in that community recover and rebuild.

One way that government can structure itself is to continue to be part of the conversation and continue to be at the table as we approach these building blocks of community recovery. My hope is that these long-term recovery committees evolve into a disaster response and relief committee that continues to carry on the conversation, continues to form partnerships with new community-based organizations and new stakeholders.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Green.

Mr. GREEN. I was basically going to echo what Ms. Wilkins said. In regard to the gaps in services, it is critical that ongoing processes are in place to meet those needs. That is one of the challenges that you often run into, where everybody is running and doing everything they think is needed and not necessarily meeting the needs. So that is one of the important aspects, that you have those ongoing meetings. We talked about communications, and I too had my computer inundated with communications from everywhere, but it was important. I took the time to review and see what was necessary, and then, when we met with our network, we were able to provide those services that were not being provided.

So it is critical that you have that process in place also and that the Government, the local communities, are there, being a part of that process.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Bourg.

Ms. BOURG. I and my staff, both after Hurricane Andrew and also since the Katrina and Rita hurricanes, have attended several parish—that is what they call counties in Louisiana—meetings on unmet needs, and we found them to be close to useless. They are pretty dysfunctional. They have not helped one, single poor person do anything to recover. They are fairly argumentative and heavy-handed by those who want to put many structures in place sud-

denly, much to the disgruntlement of those others that have been working in the community and may be in smaller organizations.

It soaks up a lot of leadership time. I am not saying that we should not have them, but I have not seen them function well over 15 years. So I do not know why they would suddenly in Louisiana start functioning better.

They are very focused on services, talking about services, and not development. The one place that I saw after Hurricane Andrew in 1992 was about 2 years later, when most of what had to be done was done. People would come together and find those folks who had kind of fallen through the cracks. That was about the best I have seen of the unmet needs committees.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you. There are just a couple more people wanting to talk.

Ms. Franklin.

Ms. FRANKLIN. I want to echo what Lorna said. It is the same thing in my parish. We are seeing the very same thing. The meetings are tedious. They are held every Wednesday. I guess the thing that I looked at was that the people who are actually doing the work are the people who are not at these meetings, and the meetings are being facilitated by people who are not even from the State of Louisiana, who do not have a clue about what we need to be doing and feeling the voice of the people that we bring to the table.

The Community Action Agencies, the other Community Services Block Grant units, the faith-based organizations, the other community-based groups—we have been doing this work for decades, so we are the voices and the eyes and the ears of the people in the community.

It is just appalling to me that people would come into the community and start telling us how we need to do this work that we have been doing very successfully for years.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Wright.

Ms. WRIGHT. I have a different take on long-term recovery committees. I will go back to a much smaller disaster that hit at Thanksgiving 2004. A very small community in Louisiana called Allen was hit by a tornado and was deemed by the folks at FEMA too small to qualify for individual assistance.

So the people of that community formed a long-term recovery committee or unmet needs committee from scratch. We had to do everything from raising money to getting lumber donated and volunteer management—the whole nine yards. It involved business and community leaders from Central Louisiana. It was a long and arduous process. A long-term recovery committee is just that—it is hard. And it is creating a new organization from lots of groups that have been there since day one, slaving over details and logistics and being there when nobody else is there. It is very difficult to bring those groups together to where they are a functioning organization.

So it is hard, it is tedious, but it does work. And the people who are there trying to help form those committees, yes, are from other parts of the country and the States, but they are there to help organize the group.

One thing that is very hard—it is difficult to understand when people are not being helped immediately. If the ground rules are not established for how that group is going to work up front, then down the road, when cases are being worked and things are being managed and the system starts to work, it becomes very dysfunctional if those things are not agreed upon right away. So I definitely want to support the long-term committees.

We have a grant through the Corporation for National Service that provides VISTA volunteers to help staff those committees, so we have people going out right now to try to recruit the committees to hire those people and get them in place to help be facilitators for the groups.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Hazelwood.

Mr. HAZELWOOD. I just want to comment that I find it disappointing when you talk about the long-term recovery groups being made up of people who are actually not there to help, because that is not the way they are intended to be.

I know that from our own experience—and I do not know how well-received this comment will be—but so often, when the long-term recovery committee's sole existence is to form a 501(c)(3) and get a board, they spend all their time trying to create a reason for their existence, and that is not what they are designed for. They are designed to be there to bring resources to the table so that when a case is brought to the table, we can resolve the case. That is what they are designed for, and if anything other than that is what is going on there, that is disappointing to hear from my perspective, because as an organization whose primary goal is to do the case management and work with the clients to get their recovery plan completed to whatever their satisfaction is, that is what that table is for—to bring the resources to the table to help people. And if there are other agendas there, they really should not be there.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you, Mr. Hazelwood.

Mr. Hawks.

Mr. HAWKS. It is interesting, the mixed feelings about the unmet needs committees and whatever else they are called, because there is a variety of terms used.

NGOs can be hampered by their own need to compete, and I think when we are focused on our own competitiveness rather than the needs of the people in those communities, they are probably not going to be very well-run, very helpful committees. And it may take, whether it is a VAL position or a State position or a local government position, somebody who is not in the competition to sit down and broker the process so that people's needs are met.

I guess all of us have had experiences where they have been very good and they have been very bad, and the competition that exists in the industry is part of the problem, I think.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Ms. Wilkins.

Ms. WILKINS. To echo what you said, Katrina was a great equalizer for us. Many of our community-based organizations suffered the same losses, so the competitiveness has been thrown out the window.

We have had experiences with unmet needs committees that were some of the ugliest ones I have seen. So one of the things that we did early on in the New Orleans area was to create some regional committee oversight, so that volunteer management—we have talked a lot about volunteers coming in and having particular needs—could be brought to that particular committee. In addition to the local parish unmet needs or long-term recovery committees in the New Orleans area, there is a regional committee that just deals with some of the issues and challenges and sees if there is any common ground that we can build on to help them meet those challenges.

The same with donations management and client management. And we are also looking—again, I go back to the emotional support that is going to be needed down the line—we have established a mental health component to that. So I agree with what Tom said. It is disappointing to hear that there are people there with agendas that are not the same, but I can tell you when those agendas are the same, and the fences are down, and you look across the table and try to figure out whose resources can better be brought to bear on a particular issue, it works.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Mr. Daroff.

Mr. DAROFF. Just one final comment along this thread, and that is that one thing we heard throughout Mississippi is that the recovery has been the best thing to happen to inter-religious, interfaith, interracial relations throughout the region; that, perhaps in some part due to government's action or inaction, folks coming together themselves through groups like those represented around this table has really brought them together and helped to strengthen the bonds of the mosaic of that community.

Ms. FAGNONI. Thank you.

Are there any other comments, or will that be the final comment before we close out? I just want to give people one more chance for any final comments.

[Pause.]

Ms. FAGNONI. All right. Thank you very much again on behalf of the committee and staff. We very much appreciate the time you have spent.

As Senator Enzi said, the record will remain open.

Also, I understand that the Corporation for National and Community Service has made some materials available. If you would like any of the materials that the Corporation for National and Community Service has put together, please see Kathy in the back.

Once again, thank you very much again for your time and your thoughts and ideas.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

It's a privilege to be part of the roundtable discussion today. Hurricane Katrina changed the lives of thousands of Americans in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and we knew the enormity of the disaster would make the road to recovery long and difficult. You heard the call to action, and you responded with great skill and compassion. I commend you for all you've done so well and for all you continue to do each day.

More than 1,000 people lost their lives in the hurricanes, and over 700,000 people were affected. Families suddenly found themselves homeless, with only the clothes on their back and little hope for transportation, food and water. Many evacuees were minorities and some faced language barriers. Many of us visited the region and were horrified at the devastation of lives and communities.

Many of us hoped that if there was any ray of light, it was because the plight of the poor was so clear to all that it would shock the Nation into action and end the silent slavery of poverty. But in the weeks since then, that hope was not fulfilled.

In a survey conducted by The Public Policy Research Lab in Louisiana, residents rated the response of religious and community-based organizations as highly effective, but government's response—at all levels—was rated much more negatively.

Americans know they have a role to play in looking out for each other. Everyone here saw the need and heard the pleas of the victims and immediately went to their assistance. Your role was particularly inspiring, when you yourselves and your organizations were also affected by the storms.

It's a wonderful country when citizens themselves respond like that. But we also have to wonder, what kind of country is it that relies solely on the caring of its people, while the Government hides and fails to meet its own responsibility.

Personal responsibility, community responsibility, and government responsibility go hand in hand. When one of them breaks down, as it did in preparing, responding, and recovering from this disaster, we have to fix it.

The President's disaster plan calls on the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster to play a major role in response and recovery efforts. I'm interested in learning more about the good work you have done and how your organizations have met the needs of the hurricane victims.

We are also here to learn how your organizations worked together, and what Federal, State, and local government should have done as well. You saw devastation and you rushed to the front lines, not because you were asked to, but because it's what you do—not just in times of emergency, but every day.

You're vital to the strength of the Gulf Coast communities you serve and you're essential in making them whole again.

Your experiences, recommendations, and guidance now can help us formulate more effective response to future crises, in which government meets its responsibility too.

Thank you again for joining us today, and I look forward to hearing from each of you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK (NDRN)

In the past, too many communities have dismissed the needs of people with disabilities. With the recent disastrous hurricanes on the Gulf Coast, this dismissal often has proved deadly. If towns and cities viewed individuals with disabilities as valued members of the community, they would ensure that they were at the table when important decisions were being made—such as emergency preparedness. Thirty plus years after the integration of children with disabilities into public schools and 15 years after the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act and people with disabilities are still often forgotten.

In every State and community, there are disability advocacy programs such as the Protection & Advocacy (P&A) network and the Independent Living Centers which have the capacity to address issues of emergency preparedness. There also are a wide variety of advocacy organizations that address the needs of people with disabilities—such as The Arc, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the National Mental Health Association, etc. As decisions are made, people with disabilities and representatives of disability organizations must be at the table.

Individuals with disabilities make up well over 20 percent of the population in most of the areas on the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama coasts hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. Individuals with disabilities are also disproportionately represented among the poorest of the poor. The impact of the storms and their aftermath was disproportionately negative for them due to lack of community planning; lack of accessible transportation; and the failure of first responders, the Red Cross and other shelter providers to recognize their special needs and be willing to address them. In addition, individuals with disabilities were often:

- separated from family members and caregivers, mobility devices, assistive technology, service animals, and critically needed medications;
- improperly referred to institutional settings in violation of every precept of disability policy; and
- turned away from, or not provided, reasonable shelter, or segregated in so-called “special needs” shelters.

In addition, organizations such as the federally mandated and funded Protection and Advocacy agencies in the affected States were improperly denied their legal access to shelters and/or individuals with disabilities.

Throughout this entire ordeal, FEMA has been woefully uneducated as to the needs of individuals with disabilities and unprepared to address these needs. Six months after the disaster struck, the Advocacy Center—Louisiana’s federally mandated P&A for individuals with disabilities—Mississippi Center for Justice, the Welfare Law Center, Inc. and the Public Interest Law Project filed a class action suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana against FEMA. The suit challenges FEMA’s failure to provide accessible temporary housing—often in the form of trailers—that is usable by people with disabilities.

The Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement promise assistance without discrimination or partiality, but guided solely by the needs of those seeking assistance. Unfortunately, this was not the case in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as the needs of individuals with disabilities were too often overlooked or not properly met. As an organization with a Federal charter, the Red Cross *must* be better equipped to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and their families in a truly impartial manner. Indeed, natural disasters do not discriminate—neither should emergency responders.

NDRN encourages public policymakers to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are adequately addressed in all future emergency preparedness plans and at all levels—the needs of individuals with disabilities must not be ignored by those responsible for establishing State and local emergency preparedness plans.

[Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the roundtable was concluded.]