

The President's Radio Address September 24, 2005

Good morning. This weekend I will visit U.S. Northern Command in Colorado where we're monitoring Hurricane Rita. As the hurricane continues along its destructive path, the American people can know, courageous and dedicated men and women are responding to our citizens in need. We are marshaling resources of the Federal Government to save lives and property, and bring comfort to those who have evacuated because of this storm.

Over the past week, Federal, State, and local governments have been closely coordinating their efforts for Hurricane Rita. The Department of Homeland Security and FEMA prepositioned food, water, ice, and emergency response team, and helped with the evacuations in Texas and Louisiana. Military assets were also prepositioned so they could be deployed immediately after the storm passes.

At this moment, the following Navy ships are in the region: the *Iwo Jima*, the *Shreveport*, the *Tortuga*, the *Grapple*, the *Patuxent*, and the *Comfort*. The Texas National Guard has activated its Guardsmen, nearly 3,500 so far, with more on call if they are needed. Coast Guard cutters, aircraft, and helicopters are in place, ready to rescue, evacuate, and relocate civilians trapped by the storm. And additional Coast Guard air crews and aircraft are now arriving from around the country.

We've also organized and identified civilian volunteers, including more than 200 doctors and more than 400 registered nurses. The American Red Cross is prepared to deliver hundreds of thousands of meals a day. Our Government is taking every step possible to protect life and bring comfort to those affected.

As we respond to Hurricane Rita, we're continuing our efforts to help the citizens of the gulf coast recover from Hurricane Katrina, a storm that has caused unprece-

ented destruction across an entire region. The recovery of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi is a commitment of the American people, and in this effort, all Americans have a role to play. In the recovery effort, the Federal Government has a vital role, and we'll do our duty. We'll help rebuild roads, bridges, schools, water systems, and other infrastructure in the disaster zone. We will cut through redtape in Washington so we can speed the work of rebuilding and get the gulf coast region back on its feet.

In the recovery effort, State and local leaders will play a vital role in laying out their plans and vision for the future of their communities. Earlier this week, I met with community leaders and local officials in the region to hear their ideas on rebuilding and recovery. I told them that the vision of a revitalized New Orleans should come from the people of New Orleans, and the vision of a new gulf coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama should come from the people of those States. We will do everything we can to guide the recovery effort and help them realize their vision so that communities along the gulf coast are better and stronger than before the storm.

In the recovery effort, the private sector will play a vital role. To rebuild lives and communities, we need to encourage small-business growth in that region, with immediate tax relief and other incentives for job-creating investment. Private enterprise is the engine for creating new jobs in America, and it will be the engine that drives the recovery of the gulf coast.

In the recovery effort, the American people will play a vital role. This week, Laura visited Texas to thank leaders of faith-based groups who've rallied to help their Louisiana neighbors in desperate need. Charities and houses of worship and idealistic men and women across America have

opened up their homes, their wallets, and their hearts to the victims of Katrina. And with the arrival of another violent storm, our neighbors in the gulf coast will need continued help. Our fellow citizens in the affected areas can know they can count on the good hearts of the American people.

The past 3 weeks have tested our Nation and revealed the strength and resilience of our people. Americans have the determination and the will to overcome any challenge from man or nature. The courageous spirit of America will carry us through any storm,

and the compassionate soul of our Nation will help us rebuild.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:50 p.m. on September 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Texas Emergency Operations Center in Austin, Texas *September 24, 2005*

Listen, I want to stop by to thank you all for the hard work you're doing. I appreciate Senator Hutchison and Cornyn, Congressman DeLay, Governor Perry.

First of all, the people of the State are counting on you. And I know you're working hard, and I appreciate the response. Nobody asks for these things, but when they come, we have a duty. I'm really here to let the folks in Texas know that the Federal Government knows we have a responsibility to support you in the mission of saving lives, first and foremost, and then help and rebuild their lives.

There's some issues that we've been briefed on that I think it's important for our fellow citizens to understand, in Texas, that for those who feel like they need to get back to a city like Houston, it's important to delay your trip so that essential personnel are able to get to the affected areas. We've got—we're moving assets—military assets, for example—trying to help people who need help, and if the highways are clogged, it's going to make it hard to get those assets into the affected areas.

Houston hospitals, for example, are in need of nurses. Nurses who are now trying to get back in are having problems getting

on the highways. And so I would ask for those of you in the State to—who are in safe places now, not to hurry back to a city like Houston and let these highways flow the necessary goods and services to the people in deep east Texas who have been affected.

I know for a lot of folks in this State, it's miserable times. I hope you can take some comfort knowing there's a lot of people—like the people in this room—who are working overtime to save you and to help you, and that I think you'll be amazed by the extraordinary compassion of the people of Texas as they rise up to help their fellow citizens in need.

At any rates, it's good to see you all. Thank you for your hard work. May God bless those who have been affected, and may God bless those who are helping those who have been affected, and may God bless the country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Rick Perry of Texas.