

Week Ending Friday, September 1, 2006

Proclamation 8043—National Day of Remembrance of Hurricane Katrina, 2006

August 25, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

One year ago, a vast coastline of towns and communities was virtually destroyed; one of America's great cities was submerged; and many lives were lost in one of the worst natural disasters in our Nation's history. On this National Day of Remembrance of Hurricane Katrina, we honor those who did not survive the fury of the storm and those who continue to put their lives back together in its aftermath. We also remember the heroism of ordinary citizens who touched our hearts with their bravery and compassion and moved our whole Nation to action.

Hurricane Katrina brought many days of struggle and sorrow; yet, we also witnessed extraordinary acts of courage and kindness. Rescue workers, other first responders, and concerned citizens from around the country risked their lives to save others and performed heroically under the most difficult of circumstances. Many were victims themselves, acting on a sense of duty greater than their own suffering. Men, women, and children across America rallied to help their neighbors in desperate need, providing food, water, shelter, and hope to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Those days tested our Nation, and they revealed a resilience more powerful than any storm.

Millions of lives were changed in a day by that cruel and destructive storm. America accepted the challenge to restore broken communities and disrupted lives not as a burden, but as our responsibility to help our fellow citizens. Victims and volunteers continue to demonstrate a spirit that cannot be broken—a core of strength that survives all hurt, a

faith in God that no storm can take away, and an unyielding determination to clear the wreckage and build anew.

In the past year, Federal, State, and local governments have worked to enhance our Nation's ability to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. The Federal Government has conducted an extensive review of preparedness and response efforts, and actions are being taken at every level to improve communications and coordination and strengthen emergency response capabilities. The American people can know that our government is working hard to be prepared to protect life and property should we face another such challenge.

In the life of our Nation, we have often been reminded that nature is an awesome force, and that all life is fragile. However, Americans have always summoned the will and compassion to persevere and rebuild. Guided by our enduring American spirit, we know that a bright new dawn will rise over the great city of New Orleans, and the entire Gulf Coast region will reemerge stronger and more vibrant than ever.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 29, 2006, as a National Day of Remembrance of Hurricane Katrina. I call upon State and local governments, places of worship, and all Americans to mark this day with services and appropriate observances. I also encourage all Americans to remember and support the continued effort to rebuild our Nation's great Gulf Coast.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on August 30. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

August 26, 2006

Good morning. Earlier this week, I had coffee with Rocky Vaccarella in the White House. Rocky is from St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana, and he and his family lost everything they owned to Hurricane Katrina. Rocky drove to Washington to thank the Federal Government for its efforts to help people like him, and he brought a trailer along to help remind us that many good people along our gulf coast are still living in difficult conditions and that the hard work of rebuilding has only just begun.

This Tuesday marks the first anniversary of Katrina—one of the deadliest and most costly natural disasters in American history. In Mississippi, the storm wiped out virtually everything along an 80-mile stretch of the coast, flattening homes and destroying entire communities. In Louisiana, flooding left 80 percent of the city of New Orleans underwater. The human costs were even more terrible. More than a thousand people died, countless families lost their homes and livelihoods, and tens of thousands of men, women, and children were forced to flee the region and leave behind everything they knew.

During the storm and in the days that followed, Americans responded with heroism and compassion. Coast Guard and other personnel rescued people stranded in flooded neighborhoods and brought them to high ground. Doctors and nurses stayed behind to care for their patients, and some even went without food so their patients could eat. Many of the first-responders risking their lives to help others were victims themselves—wounded healers, with a sense of duty greater than their own suffering. And across our great land, the armies of compassion rallied to bring food and water and hope to fellow citizens who had lost everything.

In these and countless other selfless acts, we saw the spirit of America at its best.

Unfortunately, Katrina also revealed that Federal, State, and local governments were unprepared to respond to such an extraordinary disaster. And the floodwaters exposed a deep-seated poverty that has cut people off from the opportunities of our country. So last year, I made a simple pledge: The Federal Government would learn the lessons of Katrina; we would do what it takes, and we would stay as long as it takes, to help our brothers and sisters build a new gulf coast, where every citizen feels part of the great promise of America.

That was the same pledge I repeated to Rocky during his visit to the White House. This pledge meant stronger levees and rebuilt homes and new infrastructure. It also means safe streets and neighborhoods filled with locally-owned businesses and more opportunities for everyone.

Next week, Laura and I will return to Mississippi and New Orleans to meet with local citizens and officials, and review the progress we have made. The Federal Government has conducted a thorough review of its response to natural disasters, and we're making reforms that will improve our response to future emergencies. With help from Congress, we have committed \$110 billion to the recovery effort, and we are playing a vital role in helping people clear debris, repair and rebuild their homes, reopen their businesses and schools, and put their lives back together.

The Federal Government will continue to do its part. Yet a reborn gulf coast must reflect the needs, the vision, and the aspirations of the people of Mississippi and Louisiana. And their State and local officials have a responsibility to help set priorities and make tough decisions, so people can plan their futures with confidence.

One year after the storms, the gulf coast continues down the long road to recovery. In Mississippi and Louisiana, we can see many encouraging signs of recovery and renewal, and many reminders that hard work still lies ahead. This work will require the sustained commitment of our Government,