

who introduced the President; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Billy Nungesser, president, Plaquemines Parish; Maj. Gen. Bennet C. Landreneau, Adjutant General, Louisiana National Guard; former Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Region Recovery and Rebuilding Donald E. Powell; Maj. Gen. Douglas V. O'Dell, Jr., USMC (Ret.), in his capacity as Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Chris Paul, point guard, New Orleans Hornets; President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and Warren J. Riley, superintendent, New Orleans Police Department.

Statement on the Death of Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones

August 20, 2008

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Chairwoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones.

As a proud lifelong resident of Ohio's 11th District, she devoted her career to serving her community at both the State and national levels. She was an effective legislator who was dedicated to helping small businesses, improving local schools, expanding job opportunities for Ohioans, and ensuring that more of them have access to healthcare. After making history as the first African American woman elected to Congress from Ohio, the Congresswoman worked to expand the rights of all Americans. Our Nation is grateful for her service.

Our thoughts and prayers are with her son Mervyn Leroy Jones II and the rest of her family.

Remarks Following a Dinner With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in Gulfport, Mississippi

August 20, 2008

The President. Governor, thank you for coming.

Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi. Thank you, sir.

The President. I thank the United States Senators—Senator Wicker, Senator Cochran—Congressman Taylor, mayors, supervisors—county supervisors, small-business owners, high school teacher. Thank you all

very much for giving me a chance to come and visit with you.

I have brought—you know, a member of my administration, United States Marine General—retired—O'Dell is here to listen to people. We still understand there are issues, but I do want to say something about the progress. I remember what it looked like right after the storm. I remember what it looked like in the first anniversary right after the storm. I remember what it looked like last year, Governor. And things have improved a lot.

Are there still people wondering about their future? Absolutely. Do they still have other issues to deal with, like cleaning out some of the bureaucracy so that the housing issue can get solved quicker? Absolutely. But things are better here on the gulf coast of Mississippi.

And one reason they're better is because you've had strong leadership, and the other reason—at the State and local level. And the other reason is because people refused to give in to the storm. People picked up their lives and decided that this is where their home was going to be and made something out of these communities.

I remember going to the schools right after the storm hit and seeing the determination of the teachers and principals about how—whether they had to be in a trailer or in a old building, they were going to teach these kids. And the spirit of southern Mississippi is real, and it's alive. And the leaders here around the table know better than me what I'm talking about.

So, I appreciate you giving me a chance to come. I told people that I'm almost through, but I'm sprinting to the finish. This is not the farewell dinner. [*Laughter*] But this is an opportunity to come and listen to what's on people's minds, with the idea of continuing to work with the elected officials to solve problems and make sure this is even better 6 months from now than it is today.

At any rate, I want to thank you. Food's good here too. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your time, Governor. Thank you.

Governor Barbour. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:28 p.m. at Vrazel's Fine Food. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Roger F. Wicker of Mississippi; and Maj.