



National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons
National Day of Prayer and Call to Action
March 3-5, 2006

Speaking Points for Religious Organizations (Long)

What Needs to be Done

Fact, Figures and Talking Points: Proposed Federal Redevelopment and Assistance Goals for the Gulf Coast. Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, The Ohio State University.

http://www.linkedfate.org/documents/Facts_Figures_Talking%20Points_Supporting%20Principles.pdf

- Rebuild the Gulf Region and ensure that the people of New Orleans never again face the devastation wrought by failed levees.
 - Levees protecting New Orleans were not built for the most severe hurricanes. Few people will move back, and no true reconstruction will begin, until the federal government commits itself to rebuilding the federally constructed levees whose failure led to the flooding of the city in the first place.
 - A rebuilt New Orleans needs the protection of a Category 5 hurricane strength levee and flood protection system. Without this vital insurance for the safety and health of the City's and its inhabitants, rebuilding efforts will be stifled.
 - Although the federal government has begun reconstruction activity for New Orleans levees, plans and funding commitments are not currently addressing the need for additional levee protection. Currently, around \$3 billion has been dedicated to rebuilding and strengthening the levee system protecting the New Orleans region up to pre-Katrina levels. This rebuilding will be completed by the 2006 storm season, but no additional funding has been dedicated to expand the strength of the levee system to be resistant to a category 5 storm.

- Improve the lives and the destinies of Gulf Coast residents by significantly improving the conditions found in many neighborhoods prior to Katrina.

- Rebuilding efforts must create real communities of opportunity that are healthy, stable, sustainable, and economically viable. For many of us, Hurricane Katrina exposed the inequities of race and class in the Gulf Coast and throughout the country.
- Many of the neighborhoods most heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina were areas of concentrated poverty and contained few opportunities (such as high quality schools, sustainable employment) for residents. In total, flooded areas were predominately poor: 38 of the regions 49 concentrated poverty neighborhoods (neighborhoods where more than 40% of the population live in poverty) were flooded by Katrina.
- Redevelopment activities must develop and support safe, livable communities that are connected to opportunities, such as sustainable employment, public transportation, high quality education and childcare, quality accessible health care, and safe and stable neighborhoods.
- Inclusionary housing and mixed income housing are potential avenues to achieve this goal, as are other neighborhood-based strategies to produce opportunities in opportunity deprived communities.
- As redevelopment and rehabilitation plans for areas impacted by Katrina, and strategies to house those displaced by the storm are developed, several critical principles must be supported:
 - Strategies to provide immediate housing and shelter to those displaced by the storm must provide these housing options in opportunity rich areas, instead of re-concentrating the displaced in isolated or marginalized communities.
 - Redevelopment and rehabilitation must not recreate the concentrated poverty and segregated opportunity poor neighborhoods that preceded Katrina.
 - Redevelopment must remedy the public health risks and environmental risks that disproportionately impact low income communities of color, in order to create environmentally sound and healthy/safe neighborhoods.
- Provide opportunities and support for displaced Gulf Coast residents and for the communities that have so generously received them. These individuals and families must not be forgotten.
 - As of February 2006, it is estimated nearly 750,000 households remain displaced by Katrina. Media reports have cited figures as high as 1.3 million. Of the people most likely to have been displaced by the hurricane, about half lived in New Orleans. More than 85% of these households are reliant upon housing assistance from the federal government.
 - 1/5 of those displaced by the storm were likely to have been poor, and 30% had incomes that were below 1½ times the poverty line. Nationally, more than 3,000 hotels and nearly 25,000 hotel rooms are still being occupied by Katrina and Rita evacuees.

- In February, FEMA stopped temporary housing aid to 12,000 New Orleans evacuees, of which 4,400 were living in New Orleans's hotels awaiting new housing.
- Bring federal resources to the Region without redirecting funds away from programs that already serve people in need. The federal government should provide sufficient financial resources to redevelop New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, while "doing no harm" to critical social programs that serve low income/vulnerable residents and communities. Redevelopment should not be funded by cutting critical social services and programs for impoverished persons in other parts of the nation. Any proposal or redress should not exacerbate or create inequality or poverty.
 - State and local governments must not be overburdened with providing resources; the federal government should take the lead in providing funding for redevelopment.
 - The damage and abandonment caused by the hurricanes and the subsequent flooding has devastated the fiscal base of both the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana. The taxable value of property in New Orleans has decreased by 54% since Katrina, while sales tax revenues are approximately 50% lower than pre-Katrina levels.

What Went Wrong

A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina. Executive Summary.

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/15feb20061230/www.gpoaccess.gov/katrinareport/execsummary.pdf>

- Levees protecting New Orleans were not built for the most severe hurricanes
 - Responsibilities for levee operations and maintenance were diffuse.
 - The lack of a warning system for breaches and other factors delayed repairs to the levees.
 - The ultimate cause of the levee failures is under investigation, and results to be determined.
- The failure of complete evacuations led to preventable deaths, great suffering, and further delays in relief
 - Evacuations of general populations went relatively well in all three states.
 - Despite adequate warning 56 hours before landfall, Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin delayed ordering a mandatory evacuation in New Orleans until 19 hours before landfall.

- The failure to order timely mandatory evacuations, Mayor Nagin's decision to shelter but not evacuate the remaining population, and decisions of individuals led to an incomplete evacuation.
 - The incomplete pre-landfall evacuation led to deaths, thousands of dangerous rescues, and horrible conditions for those who remained.
 - Federal, state, and local officials' failure to anticipate the post-landfall conditions delayed post-landfall evacuation and support.
- Critical elements of the National Response Plan were executed late, ineffectively, or not at all
 - It does not appear the President received adequate advice and counsel from a senior disaster professional.
 - Given the well-known consequences of a major hurricane striking New Orleans, the Secretary should have designated an Incident of National Significance no later than Saturday, two days prior to landfall, when the National Weather Service predicted New Orleans would be struck by a Category 4 or 5 hurricane and President Bush declared a federal emergency.
 - The Secretary should have convened the Interagency Incident Management Group on Saturday, two days prior to landfall, or earlier to analyze Katrina's potential consequences and anticipate what the federal response would need to accomplish.
 - The Secretary should have designated the Principal Federal Official on Saturday, two days prior to landfall, from the roster of PFOs who had successfully A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE 3 completed the required training, unlike then-FEMA Director Michael Brown. Considerable confusion was caused by the Secretary's PFO decisions.
 - A proactive federal response, or push system, is not a new concept, but it is rarely utilized.
 - The Secretary should have invoked the Catastrophic Incident Annex to direct the federal response posture to fully switch from a reactive to proactive mode of operations.
 - Absent the Secretary's invocation of the Catastrophic Incident Annex, the federal response evolved into a push system over several days.
 - The Homeland Security Operations Center failed to provide valuable situational information to the White House and key operational officials during the disaster.
 - The White House failed to de-conflict varying damage assessments and discounted information that ultimately proved accurate.
 - Federal agencies, including DHS, had varying degrees of unfamiliarity with their roles and responsibilities under the National Response Plan and National Incident Management System.

- Once activated, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact enabled an unprecedented level of mutual aid assistance to reach the disaster area in a timely and effective manner.
- Earlier presidential involvement might have resulted in a more effective response.
- DHS and the states were not prepared for this catastrophic event
 - While a majority of state and local preparedness grants are required to have a terrorism purpose, this does not preclude a dual use application.
 - Despite extensive preparedness initiatives, DHS was not prepared to respond to the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina.
 - DHS and FEMA lacked adequate trained and experienced staff for the Katrina response.
 - The readiness of FEMA's national emergency response teams was inadequate and reduced the effectiveness of the federal response.
- Massive communications damage and a failure to adequately plan for alternatives impaired response efforts, command and control, and situational awareness
 - Massive inoperability had the biggest effect on communications, limiting command and control, situational awareness, and federal, state, and local officials' ability to address unsubstantiated media reports.
 - Some local and state responders prepared for communications losses but still experienced problems, while others were caught unprepared.
 - The National Communication System met many of the challenges posed by Hurricane Katrina, enabling critical communication during the response, but gaps in the system did result in delayed response and inadequate delivery of relief supplies.
- Command and control was impaired at all levels, delaying relief
 - Lack of communications and situational awareness paralyzed command and control.
 - A lack of personnel, training, and funding also weakened command and control. Ineffective command and control delayed many relief efforts.
- The military played an invaluable role, but coordination was lacking
 - The National Response Plan's Catastrophic Incident Annex as written would have delayed the active duty military response, even if it had been implemented.
 - DOD/DHS coordination was not effective during Hurricane Katrina.
 - DOD, FEMA, and the state of Louisiana had difficulty coordinating with each other, which slowed the response.

- National Guard and DOD response operations were comprehensive, but perceived as slow.
 - The Coast Guard's response saved many lives, but coordination with other responders could improve.
 - The Army Corps of Engineers provided critical resources to Katrina victims, but pre-landfall contracts were not adequate.
 - DOD has not yet incorporated or implemented lessons learned from joint exercises in military assistance to civil authorities that would have allowed for a more effective response to Katrina.
 - The lack of integration of National Guard and active duty forces hampered the military response.
 - Northern Command does not have adequate insight into state response capabilities or adequate interface with governors, which contributed to a lack of mutual understanding and trust during the Katrina response.
 - Even DOD lacked situational awareness of postlandfall conditions, which contributed to a slower response.
 - DOD lacked an information sharing protocol that would have enhanced joint situational awareness and communications between all military components.
 - Joint Task Force Katrina command staff lacked joint training, which contributed to the lack of coordination between active duty components.
 - Joint Task Force Katrina, the National Guard, Louisiana, and Mississippi lacked needed communications equipment and the interoperability required for seamless on-the-ground coordination.
 - EMAC processing, pre-arranged state compacts, and Guard equipment packages need improvement.
 - Equipment, personnel, and training shortfalls affected the National Guard response.
 - Search and rescue operations were a tremendous success, but coordination and integration between the military services, the National Guard, the Coast Guard, and other rescue organizations was lacking.
- The collapse of local law enforcement and lack of effective public communications led to civil unrest and further delayed relief
 - A variety of conditions led to lawlessness and violence in hurricane stricken areas.
 - The New Orleans Police Department was ill-prepared for continuity of operations and lost almost all effectiveness.
 - The lack of a government public communications strategy and media hype of violence exacerbated public concerns and further delayed relief.
 - EMAC and military assistance were critical for restoring law and order. Federal law enforcement agencies were also critical to restoring law and order and coordinating activities.

- Medical care and evacuations suffered from a lack of advance preparations, inadequate communications, and difficulties coordinating efforts
 - Deployment of medical personnel was reactive, not proactive.
 - Poor planning and pre-positioning of medical supplies and equipment led to delays and shortages.
 - New Orleans was unprepared to provide evacuations and medical care for its special needs population and dialysis patients, and Louisiana officials lacked a common definition of “special needs.”
 - Most hospital and Veterans Affairs Medical Center emergency plans did not offer concrete guidance about if or when evacuations should take place.
 - New Orleans hospitals, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and medical first responders were not adequately prepared for a full evacuation of medical facilities.
 - The government did not effectively coordinate private air transport capabilities for the evacuation of medical patients.
Hospital and Veterans Affairs Medical Center emergency plans did not adequately prepare for communication needs.
 - Following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Veterans Affairs Medical Center and hospitals’ inability to communicate impeded their ability to ask for help.
 - Medical responders did not have adequate communications equipment or operability.
 - Evacuation decisions for New Orleans nursing homes were subjective and, in one case, led to preventable deaths.
 - Lack of electronic patient medical records contributed to difficulties and delays in medical treatment of evacuees.
 - Top officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Disaster Medical System do not share a common understanding of who controls the National Disaster Medical System under Emergency Support Function-8.
 - Lack of coordination led to delays in recovering dead bodies.
 - Deployment confusion, uncertainty about mission assignments, and government red tape delayed medical care.

- Long-standing weaknesses and the magnitude of the disaster overwhelmed FEMA’s ability to provide emergency shelter and temporary housing
 - Relocation plans did not adequately provide for shelter. Housing plans were haphazard and inadequate.
 - State and local governments made inappropriate selections of shelters of last resort. The lack of a regional database of shelters contributed to an inefficient and ineffective evacuation and sheltering process.
 - There was inappropriate delay in getting people out of shelters and into temporary housing – delays that officials should have foreseen due to manufacturing limitations.

- FEMA failed to take advantage of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's expertise in largescale housing challenges.
- FEMA logistics and contracting systems did not support a targeted, massive, and sustained provision of commodities
 - FEMA management lacked situational awareness of existing requirements and of resources in the supply chain. An overwhelmed logistics system made it challenging to get supplies, equipment, and personnel where and when needed.
 - Procedures for requesting federal assistance raised numerous concerns. The failure at all levels to enter into advance contracts led to chaos and the potential for waste and fraud as acquisitions were made in haste.
 - Before Katrina, FEMA suffered from a lack of sufficiently trained procurement professionals. DHS procurement continues to be decentralized and lacking a uniform approach, and its procurement office was understaffed given the volume and dollar value of work.
 - Ambiguous statutory guidance regarding local contractor participation led to ongoing disputes over procuring debris removal and other services.
 - Attracting emergency contractors and corporate support could prove challenging given the scrutiny that companies have endured.
- Contributions by charitable organizations assisted many in need, but the American Red Cross and others faced challenges due to the size of the mission, inadequate logistics capacity, and a disorganized shelter process

What Religious Organizations Can Do

- Send letters from your organization or religious group to your members of Congress or visit Congressional Offices to urge the federal government to step up its efforts to rebuild communities in the Gulf Coast and provide adequate assistance to the hurricane victims, including those who have been displaced.
 - Insist that the levees in New Orleans are rebuilt to withstand a level five hurricane.
 - Insist that rebuilding in the Gulf Region must create real communities of opportunity that are healthy, stable, sustainable and economically viable.
 - Insist that FEMA reimburse cities that have provided resources to displaced hurricane victims.
 - Insist that the federal government provide adequate continuing assistance to hurricane victims who have been displaced.
- In religious services, call attention to the continued suffering of the Katrina victims and to our shared responsibility to help these individuals and families.

- Conduct discussions within your organization or religious group to create a shared understanding of the plight of the hurricane victims.
- Develop a plan of action within your organization or religious group to help the hurricane victims.
 - Raise funds.
 - Assist in providing needed resources to hurricane victims who have been relocated to your city or community.
- Write op-eds and letters to the editors of your local and regional newspapers calling for a greater federal response to the plight of the hurricane victims.
- Contact organizations that are already working to bring relief to the hurricane victims to find out how your organization or religious group can assist with these efforts.
- Launch an information campaign including engagement with local radio and television stations to inform members of your community about the magnitude of the hurricane disaster, to insist on a greater federal response and to ensure that the victims of this tragedy will not be forgotten.