



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 (Short)

**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](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.
- Improve the lives and the destinies of Gulf Coast residents by significantly improving the conditions found in many neighborhoods prior to Katrina.
- 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.
- Bring federal resources to the Region without redirecting funds away from programs that already serve people in need.

## **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
- The failure of complete evacuations led to preventable deaths, great suffering, and further delays in relief
- Critical elements of the National Response Plan were executed late, ineffectively, or not at all
- DHS and the states were not prepared for this catastrophic event
- Massive communications damage and a failure to adequately plan for alternatives impaired response efforts, command and control, and situational awareness
- Command and control was impaired at all levels, delaying relief
- The military played an invaluable role, but coordination was lacking
- The collapse of local law enforcement and lack of effective public communications led to civil unrest and further delayed relief
- Medical care and evacuations suffered from a lack of advance preparations, inadequate communications, and difficulties coordinating efforts
- Long-standing weaknesses and the magnitude of the disaster overwhelmed FEMA's ability to provide emergency shelter and temporary housing
- FEMA logistics and contracting systems did not support a targeted, massive, and sustained provision of commodities
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.