

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: HURRICANE KATRINA

HEARING

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

**EXAMINING REBUILDING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES AFTER HURRICANE
KATRINA**

SEPTMBER 8, 2005

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ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: HURRICANE KATRINA

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., in Room 106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Mike Enzi, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Enzi, Alexander, Burr, Hatch, Sessions, Kennedy, Dodd, Murray, and Clinton.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ENZI

The CHAIRMAN. I call to order this Roundtable on Hurricane Katrina. This will be a little different than some of the roundtables we have had because this will truly be a listening session. We are not going to be debating an issue. What we are trying to do is gather as much information of what can be done, how we can best achieve it in the most efficient way, and we want to do it in the shortest possible time.

Everybody will have a chance to make some comments about, from their vantage point, what could make this tragedy better, and we do have an epic tragedy. It is unlike anything that generations have seen, and that is witnessed by some of the 150-, 180-year-old homes that have stood up through storms of the past and have now been demolished. The region is just devastated. Of course, in this instance, the media has provided us with a window through which we have all been able to witness the impact of the terrible storm and what it has done with countless lives in that region.

Yet as with every disaster inflicted in the United States, we will relieve the hurting. We will repair the damage. And we will restore hope in those communities. And when I say "we," I am not talking about the Federal Government. I am talking about the people of this country. This is the most giving country in the world. It has been witnessed any time there has been a problem anywhere in the world, and we are even more giving to our neighbors.

Recently, there was a tornado in Wright, WY, and I got to watch that come into action. A few hours after the storm happened, people were lining up, ready to help clean up the mess. They were fortunate they didn't have all the flood waters to work with and it was a much smaller incident than this one. But for every person involved in a disaster anywhere, it is a 100 percent problem and it is our problem to help them in any way that we can, whether

it is encouraging volunteers, changing laws, relaxing laws, or finding money.

Now, while the rescue efforts are still in motion, many of us believe the time is not right to examine the roots of the tragedy and find out who is to blame for any of the shortfalls. It is not time to play the blame game. What we are trying to do here, and I hope across Government right now, is find ways to work together to put our feet to work and our prayers to work and start the process of addressing the short- and long-term needs of the people who are devastated by the storm.

Every relief effort must begin by identifying those who are most in need and directing the resources they need to them. The displacement of those affected by the storm has made that very difficult. We have never had this kind of a movement of people in order to take care of the problem.

Again, we need to let everybody know, and there is a great effort going on right now, that if you need assistance to help recover from the storm's impact, you must register with the Federal Emergency Management Administration. That is the one clearinghouse for knowing who has been a victim and then those people can get one-on-one help to take care of it, and that is done by calling FEMA at 1-800-621-FEMA. I can't say that enough. Communicate that person-to-person, because there are a lot of people out there that are not able to get the messages that we are delivering. People can also register online at www.fema.gov.

Now, once a person is registered, they will find help through the system, and it is being developed so that the needs will be addressed. Again, how do we get that message out to people who at the present time don't have electricity or water or food or, in many cases, even radios? If people didn't get a chance to write that down, don't worry. We are going to be giving that information out continually. It is available on the committee Web site, as well. The committee's Web site is help.senate.gov.

Senator Kennedy and I called for today's roundtable because we were faced with an unprecedented challenge, and that is how to care for a million people who have been displaced throughout the country. Much of what lies before us is common sense. Get rid of the water. Remove the debris. Restore the power. Those tasks will be challenging enough. Yet beyond the obvious needs are even more challenging needs that must be met. The children need to go to school. Families need reliable access to health care. Moms and dads need training to help them find jobs to support their families.

The whole process is a challenge. It is a challenge we will have to answer without any of the traditional means of support or infrastructure for these programs. Remember, much of the area has been devastated. It is not collecting a penny of tax revenue. Stores are closed, so businesses aren't collecting sales taxes, and workers are without jobs, so they aren't receiving paychecks that would normally help pay for the services that have to be provided.

As a former mayor, I watched the devastation caused by severe weather, and I mentioned Wright, WY, that was hit by the tornado. Plans to rebuild Wright are, of necessity, going to have to include the support and cooperation of the local, State, and Federal level, much the same as this tragedy will, and I have gotten to watch

that as kind of a mini-lab on what sorts of things are available, what the restrictions are, and how people can get help.

It will also call on us to develop innovative and creative strategies that will cut through the red tape for this kind of a huge disaster and provide the assistance that is needed quickly and efficiently. That is why we have called on some of our Nation's most talented individuals. We have them assembled here today. We are looking forward to receiving your suggestions as to what we should be doing next as we work to produce a plan of action that will see us through the after-effects of the storm and provide us with a strategy that we can use to respond to future events.

The Nation is currently focused on New Orleans, as it should be, but we have to keep in mind that there are great needs in Mississippi and Alabama and other places in the Gulf, and we should not ignore the needs of communities to which displaced families have been moved. That is a new problem for us.

Our plan of action must be based on a team approach that will include local, State, and national officials as well as the private sector and community and faith-based organizations. Since our local officials have the best sense of what is needed and how it can best be used to ensure maximum effect, they will have an important seat at the table. Working with State officials, we will coordinate our efforts with theirs to ensure that we have the ability to provide the support that is needed for the programs that will be established on the Federal, State, and local levels.

The size and scope of this problem is such that we must bring every resource we have to bear on the problem. That especially includes the American people. Already, there are countless Americans providing support for relief efforts, volunteering at centers that are working with those displaced by the hurricane, opening up their homes to those who have nowhere else to go who they don't know at all. It is the kind of character test that America has always passed with flying colors. The need is so great, and we cannot ignore our most important assets, and that is the hearts and minds of the American people. They are and will continue to be an important part of the recovery effort.

This roundtable will help direct the steps we will take in the days, weeks, and months to come to ensure that our commitment to those in need is met. There is no more urgent task facing us. We have seen the unprecedented suffering that has resulted from Hurricane Katrina. Now, we are going to do our part as a Government of the people to inspire and sustain the very best of human nature to renew and rebuild hurting families and communities.

I want to thank Senator Kennedy for his tremendous bipartisan support and effort on this and the ideas that he has been able to generate. He has a tremendous memory for things that have happened before and knows the way around Government. He has been just a tremendous help through this situation. Senator Kennedy?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much, Chairman Enzi. All of us on our committee that deal with human resources, the most basic of human resources, the education and the health of our seniors, jobs, income, this is our committee and people are hurting in

our country. I thank you for the way you have given such a priority to the needs of the people and the leadership that you have provided and to thank all of our witnesses that are here today and others that have been here on our previous meetings with Senator Enzi and myself, other members of the committee, in helping to make sure that we are going to have the kind of response that is worthy to the challenge.

Some of the images are so searing, they are burned in our memories forever, and none of us will ever forget the pictures we have seen from the Gulf Coast in recent days. We have seen the images of despair among those who are abandoned in a Nation of great wealth, of hope reborn in the faces of families reunited after surviving a calamity of Biblical proportions. We have seen great heroism, too, not only in the spectacular images of rescues by helicopters, but in the quiet courage of neighbors who helped neighbors survive the howling winds and rising waters.

We have seen darker images, too, images we thought we would never see in America—the elderly, the disabled, and the sick left to die, families split apart, American citizens trapped without food, sanitation, or adequate water in makeshift shelters. In short, we have witnessed a natural disaster turned into a national catastrophe by a botched and inadequate response, despite the bravery and sacrifice of relief workers, rescue personnel, and hurricane survivors themselves.

Most of all, these indelible images remind us that we are all part of the American family. When members of that family are in need, in want, and in fear, we all have a duty to make our family whole once more. All of us, I am sure, have been heartened by the thousands of volunteers who have honored their commitments to the American family by giving their time and their skills to healing the injured, repairing schools, counseling the grieving, and aiding survivors in finding new hope.

In my own State of Massachusetts, health professionals, educators, labor leaders, business, countless individual citizens have answered the call. Eighteen major hospitals are sending voluntary teams or supplies to the affected area. More than 30 colleges and universities in Massachusetts will enroll students impacted by Hurricane Katrina, offering housing and tuition assistance.

Congress has a major responsibility to help the survivors of this terrible ordeal rebuild their communities and their lives. Today's hearing is an important part of meeting that responsibility. The distinguished individuals seated around this table today and the organizations they represent have rolled up their sleeves to help those most in need along the Gulf Coast. They have the vision to see what must be done and the experience to know how to get it done.

As we speak, thousands of Americans displaced from their homes are at risk of epidemics, but only three working hospitals remain in Southeast Louisiana. Thousands more face the silent battles of coping with bereavement and catastrophe. We must restore shattered hospitals, assure access to health care, including mental health care, and build communities so that hurricane survivors can live with dignity and hope in homes of their own.

A-hundred-and-thirty-five thousand students in Louisiana alone have been displaced from their schools. Hundreds of schools in Mississippi have been damaged or destroyed. Students' lives have been disrupted, their semester interrupted. Fortunately, superintendents and principals across the country have reached out to students displaced by this disaster to welcome them into their classrooms. It is our turn in Congress to reach out and provide the resources needed for schools to take these students in while also helping to rebuild educational institutions devastated by Katrina.

We cannot afford to neglect the impact of this disaster on our Nation's youngest children. Many of the thousands of children and families in the Gulf region most seriously impacted by this storm were already among the most neglected and vulnerable in our Nation, devastated by the impact of poverty. It is time for Congress to act to help those young children and their families cope with the effects of trauma and build a stronger foundation for their future.

Up to 1 million Americans will be left jobless in this tragic storm. The unemployment rate in the Gulf region is expected to reach 25 percent or higher. Experts estimate that many of the affected workers will be unemployed for 9 months or more. These are staggering figures and they have national implications. Standard and Poors says that the likelihood of another recession has doubled. It is now more than 25 percent.

These families have lost absolutely everything and they need a source of income while they try to get back to their feet and begin looking for new employment. This process will undoubtedly take time, and many of these people have more basic needs, such as finding shelter or finding lost members of their families. They must be met before they can focus on finding work.

In addition, while communities across the country have generously opened their doors and their hearts to Katrina victims, the local economy in these areas does not necessarily have the capacity to accommodate the influx of workers that have arrived. Families' needs are immediate and significant. Employers and State Governments in hurricane-ravaged States cannot bear the burden of compensating huge numbers of workers that are now jobless through their unemployment compensation system. We need a comprehensive Federal response that makes disaster unemployment assistance available to every worker left jobless by the tragedy, and this Federal assistance must provide a meaningful benefit that will meet the basic needs of unemployed workers and their families as they begin their long road to recovery.

We must also take steps to see that we are better prepared for future calamities, whether from floods, earthquakes, or terrorist attacks. In the days and weeks to come, we will have much to learn that will be helpful to this task. But an essential part of building for the future is a clear-eyed assessment of the mistakes made in response to Hurricane Katrina. If we fail to recognize and admit mistakes, they are sure to be repeated.

But our task for today is to learn from our distinguished panelists how best to protect the health of those affected by the hurricane and see that they can rebuild their lives. What should be our measure of success? Some would think it would be enough to return the survivors to the lives they knew before the flooding, but

we should aim higher. For many of the survivors, the life they knew before the storm was one of ill health, inadequate education, and opportunity denied. The Nation had failed them long before Katrina hit.

Our promise to those who have survived the hurricane should not simply be to turn back the clock a month or two. It should be to fulfill the true promise of the American dream by committing ourselves to better health, better education, better job opportunities for them and all Americans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Today's forum, as I mentioned, will proceed in a little different manner than a typical Senate hearing. This is a listening session. We want to know the ideas that are out there. We not only want to hear the ideas from the panelists, we want to hear from people across the country. We do have the capability on our Web site to accept suggestions, solutions, comments. We wouldn't even mind hearing some of the bad things that are happening and some of the good things that are happening. But what we will be concentrating on will be solutions, ways that we can solve problems. So, first of all, we have got to know what the problem is, and then any of your ideas for solutions, because you are the people on the ground who work with it on a daily basis and we expect that your ideas will probably be much simpler than the solutions we would come up with.

So the primary purpose of this forum is to hear from the participants and get their short- and long-term solutions for Katrina. Accordingly, today's format will be a roundtable. There won't be any official oral statements made, but you can submit any statements that you wish for the record. That can be done either while you are here or electronically. Also, at the end, we will hopefully have a chance to get through everybody and hear their comments and suggestions. Then we may be able to have a time for some discussion about some of the solutions that have been given. Even if we don't, you will have the opportunity to put your comments and suggestions for that, again, on the Web site.

The Web site will be open through the weekend. We had said that we were going to close it Friday night, but we are going to leave it open for the weekend for a couple of reasons. One, we need a little bit more time on it, but probably more importantly, our staffs have been working tremendously both to work on this as well as higher education, ACRI authorization, and pensions, which is also affected by Katrina. They even worked through last weekend, which was a holiday weekend, to get that done, so we won't expect them to start getting through the comments until Monday morning. But it is a crisis, and we have got tremendous staff on both sides of the aisle that have learned to work together and we will be expecting that again.

So before we begin the discussion, I would like to introduce our distinguished panel of participants. We have Michael Casserly with the Great City Schools.

We have Dr. Leonard Merrell, who is the Superintendent of Katy Independent School District.

We have Dr. Diane Roussel, who is the Superintendent of the Jefferson Parish School District.

Via teleconference, we have the Alabama Education Department Task Force, which consists of Dr. Eddie Johnson, who is the Department Superintendent; Feagin Johnson, who is the Assistant Superintendent; Craig Pouncy, who is the Assistant Superintendent; Maggie Rivers, the Director of Federal Programs; Perry Taylor, who is the School Architect; and Perry Fulton, who handles child nutrition.

Via videoconference, we have over here Dr. Jennifer Leaning, who is Professor of the Practice of International Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. We have been having some difficulty with the microphone there, if it is possible, be sure that it is shut down until you speak, but I don't know if you can still hear. We want you to still be able to hear. They are having some microphone difficulties here, as you might be able to tell.

We also have with us Lisa Cox, who is the Assistant Director for Federal Affairs at the National Association of Community Health Centers.

We have Charlie Ware, who is the Chairman of the Wyoming Workforce Development Council and has come a long way for this.

We have Mark Shriver, who is the Vice President and Managing Director for Save the Children.

We have Kenneth Weigand, the Vice President for Human Resources at Walgreen's.

We have Joseph E. Savoie, the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education.

We have Kathleen Smith, the President of the Education Finance Council.

We have Major Marilyn White, the National Consultant on Adult Ministries for the Salvation Army.

We have Maurice Emsellem, is that right?

Mr. Emsellem. [via telephone.] That is right.

The CHAIRMAN. We haven't done it quite this way before. He is the Public Policy Director for the National Employment Law Project.

We have Dr. Paul Anthony, who is the Chief Medical Officer of Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association.

We have Jan Lane, who is the Vice President of Public Policy and Strategic Partnerships of the American Red Cross.

And last but not least, Dr. Tom Kirsch, Johns Hopkins, a member of the American Red Cross Disaster Services and Health Care Team.

We thank all of you for your participation and the various people that had to set up the technology to be able to bring it to us in this way. I know most of you have had to travel way across the country and in some instances have left some very important things that needed to be done to help us to begin this process, so thank you. We do want to listen. We need your experience.

Obviously, the President and the Cabinet have broad authority for providing initial disaster relief through the Stafford Disaster and Relief Assistance Act, and then the Public Health Emergency Declaration by the Secretary of the Department of Health and

Human Services, which came into effect in 2002, has made a significant difference.

So now it is your turn to tell us what we need to do prospectively to help in the catastrophe. What are the current urgent needs facing people impacted by Hurricane Katrina and what steps can and should Congress do to help meet those needs? Let us begin, and we will begin with Michael Casserly of the Great City Schools. If we can kind of pass the microphones around so that people can all hear, I would appreciate it.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL CASSERLY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. CASSERLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for your leadership, and thank you to this committee for its leadership in this critical—in these critical days.

I don't have a prepared statement for the committee because I know we are going to get into conversation, so I will be brief, and I do have a number of detailed recommendations and suggestions not only for the committee in its legislative work, but for the Department of Education in its regulatory work. When we get into the discussion, I would be happy to kind of get into some of those details.

But I wanted to say first and foremost that I am really very proud of schools all over the country for stepping up to the plate and playing such a critical role in the relief and rebuilding efforts. They are taking in students and teachers from the affected areas. They are conducting feeding programs. They are housing students and their families. They are providing clothing and uniforms. They are providing transportation. They are providing tutoring and instruction. They are providing health and medical care.

The districts that are part of our coalition, at least to date, we think have taken in some 25,000 students from the affected areas in school districting including Shreveport and Baton Rouge and Jackson, MS, Birmingham, but as far north as Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, all the way out to Portland, Long Beach, and other school districts. Our doors are wide open and we are receiving families and children all over the country.

This is basically to say, Mr. Chairman, that we really think that education here, while it is not the only sector that can play a critical role in this relief effort, education and schools, in fact, are an important component of the relief, recovery, and rebuilding effort, not only in New Orleans and Jefferson County, but in all of the receiving areas, as well, and that this committee and that Congress in general ought to consider schools as an important component in the relief and rebuilding effort.

To that end, we would suggest, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that Congress create a separate and dedicated fund for at least the Department of Education, but maybe for other agencies, as well, like the Department of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development, to address some of the immediate areas or immediate issues, not only in the heavily impacted areas like New Orleans and Jefferson County, but in many of the receiving districts that are receiving students at such a large rate.

We know that FEMA is playing a critical role in coordinating much of this, but each of the independent agencies, the Department of Education in particular, have a critical role to play and could be doing some things that FEMA either doesn't have the authority for or the expertise for or the time to do. We would suggest that the committee charge the various agencies with coordinating their work across the Federal Government with oversight by Congress.

But we can't underscore enough how important it is for the Department of Education and other agencies, as well, to have the resources that they need and the authority that they need to play a critical and coordinated role with FEMA in the provision of relief for New Orleans, Jefferson County, Biloxi, and other affected areas, and for the receiving areas.

We would also like to suggest that Congress find a way in the legislation that is now pending in front of it to create some dedicated funding for the cities and school districts that are usually independent of their cities in New Orleans, in Jefferson County, and the like. These school districts are in immediate need of cash resources to pay the bills, to honor contracts, to honor payrolls and the like, and to immediately begin and coordinate the rebuilding efforts in their individual communities. We think it is important that those heavily-impacted communities have some dedicated resources that are going straight to them. As the chairman mentioned, the revenue base of these communities has been devastated and they need some immediate cash relief and there are some legislative barriers currently in place that Congress probably ought to consider bringing down.

Let me just kind of update people on New Orleans in general. As you know, this is a school district, and I know the superintendent from Jefferson County will update people on the Jefferson County situation, but New Orleans Public School System is a school district with about 70,000 kids. About 80 percent of them are students receiving free and reduced-price lunches. About 94 percent of them are African-American. They have a school district of about 128 schools. All but eight of those schools were flooded in the storm and after the levees broke.

The school system itself has been able to identify through its hotline about 2,500 of its staff members and is working hard to get out the next payroll that they are doing through an off-site service in New Jersey. They are struggling mightily to keep their system afloat financially. They are well into their reserve fund and are just about tapped out.

With the eight schools that were not flooded—this is in the West Bank area of the city—they have two high schools that they still have in place. Then they have six other schools that were not flooded, and they are trying desperately to bring those two high schools back online and then convert the other six schools to K-8 schools, and they think they can serve someplace around 2,800 kids in the two high schools and another 4,000 kids in the other six K-8 schools, and if they double-schedule the kids, they may be able to serve as many as 13,000 kids within a matter of months. They are desperately trying to reopen at least some of the schools and make sure that as workers come back in, which the city is desperately

going to need to rebuild itself, that the parents and the workers have schools in which they can place their kids.

We would strongly urge the committee, and again, I have some detailed suggestions on legislation and regulatory things, but that Congress authorize a separate set of funds through the Department of Education that can be used for immediate relief, not only for the impacted schools, but for some of the receiving schools, and then to coordinate those efforts across the various agencies and to put some revenue relief in place immediately for New Orleans, Jefferson County, and some of the other affected school districts. I would be happy to get into some of the details as we go further in the discussion today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Leonard Merrell?

STATEMENT OF LEONARD MERRELL, Ed.D., SUPERINTENDENT, KATY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT, KATY, TEXAS

Mr. MERRELL. Mr. Chairman and Senators, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today and thank you for listening and being concerned about what is going on around this Nation.

Katy Independent School District is a school district of 47,000 students. We are in the West Houston part of Harris County, comprised of three counties. We are a fast-growing district, so we are kind of used to seeing 2,500 to 3,200 students each year coming into our district. So because of that, we do have some experience with fast growth, but nothing to compare to what we have seen lately.

As I sat here, and certainly Senator Kennedy's comments, I appreciate those, and certainly if we could do many of the things, in fact, possibly all of them, but certainly many of them as quickly as possible, I think his comments could be read again and we could move pretty quickly if we could do that with the comments that he just said.

But my thought as I sat here and listened to the comments that have been made up to this point in time, I am reminded of what has happened in our school district. When obviously we observed what was happening in Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama and other parts of the country, we knew we would be affected, but we didn't know exactly how. But very quickly, we started getting in evacuees, families that were coming in with nothing but simply what they had in their hand. Since about last Thursday, we have enrolled over 900 students. We will probably enroll, my guess is, today, about 300 students. We enrolled over 300 yesterday alone.

From the very first day that we knew that we were going to get one student or hundreds of students, our plan has been to get those students in school as quickly as possible and to meet every possible need that those students had that we could meet. They were coming to us with no transcripts and with health records that were mostly gone, grade placements. Things like that were just issues that many times we just got incomplete information on. But we knew without question that our first obligation was to those families and specifically to those children that needed to go into school.

We didn't forget about the cost. We didn't forget about where that money was coming from, and I will not spend but only five seconds just simply saying that you have read about the plight of Texas finance and things aren't resolved in that State yet regarding school finance. However, it was never our thought that we wouldn't take as many children in our district as we needed to and that wanted to come to our district, and indeed, they are coming in very quickly.

We had those children in school almost immediately. When they walked into the building, it was like it was time to go to school, and they were in the school. We had agencies that were helping us.

And I am reminded where I was going initially with these comments. I am reminded in a much, much smaller way of what it has taken for us to be able to get—we have had upwards to 3,000 families that have come into our school district that are being taken care of by a number of different agencies, from the Katy Christian Ministries to the Chambers of Commerce to the churches to the local EMSs to our city of Katy and our school district. We could never have done what we are doing without every one of those individuals and those entities doing their work. We have had calls and e-mails and actually goods sent from all over the Nation to our community to help those individuals that are coming to our particular district.

I also represent 54 school districts in what we know as the Region Four area, which encompasses all of Harris County. You have seen many times already and many accounts of what is happening in Houston ISD and the thousands that are in the Astrodome and the busing that is necessary to get them out to the schools, and so that is a challenge that is—it is almost impossible for them to accomplish everything they need to do. But I do know from a meeting I had with the Superintendent of Houston just a day or so ago that they will, indeed, meet that challenge, and they are, indeed, meeting that challenge as we speak today.

There are so many needs that I am sure will be articulated around this table that I won't try to repeat them all. But these children are coming to a new land, and we are getting children that have many needs, and not just the educational needs that they have, but obviously they have lost in most cases everything that they own. And what our responsibility is is not only to educate them, but to give them the dignity back that we want them to have to be able to live and to go on from here.

We know from not only what we read, but we know from what we have been told from people who have been a part of disaster planning and trying to solve the issues that come up with disasters that this is only the beginning. And because it is only the beginning of a life for so many evacuees, we must look long-term at how we are going to deal not only with the students that are in our district that so many of them are saying to us that they are there to stay. They are not going back. That is what they say initially. What they do, who knows what they will do, but that is what they are saying at this point in time.

The psychological needs, their mental State is something that we are very cognizant of, not only of those students that have come into our district, but our district itself. We are fast-growing, but

that doesn't mean we have an endless amount of space in our district, and that space is being taken very quickly.

So I would just urge you to continue to look at how you could fund these expenses, not only that we have, but expenses that so many other districts, and the ones that obviously are impacted directly by this in those States already mentioned.

I couldn't, as a school district superintendent, come to a meeting like this without at least mentioning to you how No Child Left Behind will be affected by this, whether it is in our district or some of the other affected districts. The notation of "highly qualified teachers" and the calculations of that, the annual yearly progress that certainly we are measured on each and every year, all the accountability issues that are there, we have taken all of No Child Left Behind and continue to try to raise our accountability efforts, and it is a matter of record so you can look and see that we have done an excellent job, our teachers have.

I worry about our teachers who are impacted by this. We have been interviewing teachers from Louisiana, Mississippi. We have started to employ some of them on a just "as needed" basis. We haven't needed to employ a large number yet, but I think that we probably will if the numbers continue to rise.

We are there in Texas to help our neighbors. We believe from the very beginning, from the day one that I met with my staff, a relatively large number of people that have to do with everything from the education of these children to the transportation to the feeding, all of those things, the medical end of this thing, that it was our belief from the beginning that we had a legal, but more importantly, we had a moral responsibility to help in every way that we can, and we see individuals doing more than you would ever expect individuals to do. You see that all across this country. It is witnessed every day in Katy, TX.

And so I am here today to tell you that we are pleased to do our part in helping the evacuees as they move to other places and as they decide how they are going to deal with their lives, the future. But we also would just ask you to, as these agencies that I have mentioned earlier have stepped up and they have done whatever is necessary to meet the needs of these evacuees, we would just ask our Federal Government to be that same partner with us as we look for the funding that is necessary, not only in Texas, but all across this Nation that is impacted by this.

I would be pleased to answer any questions about what we are doing in our district to meet the needs. And I will assure you, Senator, that those 900 children that have enrolled in the Katy School District were having school today. Those kids are in nice, calm classrooms, welcomed with open arms by the other students who do understand, very vividly understand, what is going on in our neighboring States. I will assure you they have been welcomed, probably more than any other group has been welcomed to our district. So we are pleased to be able to do that and I again thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, and thanks for all of your effort at accommodating these people, you and your district and community.

Dr. Diane Roussel?

**STATEMENT OF DIANE ROUSSEL, Ed.D., SUPERINTENDENT OF
JEFFERSON PARISH SCHOOL DISTRICT, LOUISIANA**

Ms. ROUSSEL. Good morning. I come, I guess, from what I guess you would call the hurricane front. I am surrounded in part of the area that was hit hardest with the hurricane. Jefferson Parish has 450,000 residents. We have 84 schools and 52,000 students. For anyone to assume the responsibility of all of those children is significant, especially in other places.

I feel as though I am the spokesperson for St. Bernard, Clackamas, Orleans, and the areas that really did flood. We have parishes that are underwater and that will be totally underwater for a long time. Our proximity to those school systems makes us sort of probably the first to be able to come back, because we sustained much wind damage, but our parish is working diligently to restore electricity and other means, water, everything that is basic to existence.

About one-third of our schools could come back as early as we are allowed back into our parish. I think that is important in the light of what you said, Mr. Casserly, that if we can recreate the hub or the economic development in that area so that we can receive funds and generate funds, it would be very important to us.

I think Senator Kennedy captured it vividly, the description. We have been through hurricanes, but nothing like this. We have grown up with hurricanes, but nothing like this. And we have grown up with flooding.

So if one-third of our schools can be repaired, I would tell you there is probably another half that we could isolate parts of the building off and start up again, not just for Jefferson, but for St. Bernard, Orleans, and Clackamas. The flooding waters will take a long time for those other parishes and the economy generation is extremely important in that area, in our area.

Some of our schools will never reopen. Some will reopen in 2006, 2007. We will be a fluid school system, meaning that we will have to send children out for a while, but if you know anything about my part of the world, they are very community-oriented and very family-oriented and they want to come back. There is a culture where the children go to school and come back.

We must rebuild quickly. My concern is that if we are not allowed in and we do not rebuild quickly, that people will stay away, that our teachers will not come back, that our workers will not come back, and a whole significant part of this economy in the State and in the United States will be gone, not to mention the culture and the human resource.

When I speak for my sister parishes, I would like to say that if you combine all of our student populations—I have 84,000, Orleans has over 100,000, and we are only talking public school children. If you know anything about our part of the world, 40 percent of our children go to private and parochial. So the student population is much larger than people imagine. Our workforce exceeds well over 15,000, 20,000 people.

We have issues, and I would like to talk about those issues and needs. Funding—in an effort to help other school systems who are taking our children, our State has said they will take one-third of our minimum foundation funds. In a school system that is totally

dependent, 50 percent or more, on sales tax and property tax, I am already down 50 percent, and then goes another third. We need that money just to maintain, rebuild, and reopen.

Senator KENNEDY. Could you explain that one more time?

Ms. ROUSSEL. Yes. My part of the world, we have property tax, but not to the extent that other places have property tax. Our concern with the millage is that the people are out of work, their homes are destroyed, and their ability to pay those millages are gone. As you said, sales tax for Jefferson Parish, that means \$12 million a month for each and every—we are the largest or second-largest parish in Louisiana and considered, basically because of our industry in the parish, to be one of the more affluent when we are up and running, not in terms of children and poverty by any means because we have plenty of those. We have 80 percent children in poverty. But without the sales tax base, without the millage, and the minimum foundation program is a per pupil amount given to our schools, and if a third of that is gone, the fund balance that we had become so proud of in 3 years is gone in less than 6 weeks.

Other things that concern us are the way we do paperwork, the cash flow. Typically, we have to spend, document, and be reimbursed. We can't do that. Our budgets are gone, and I guess we are asking for Federal help, State help.

[Pause.]

Ms. ROUSSEL. I apologize.

Senator KENNEDY. Just take your time. These are very difficult to talk about, so we all understand that. We are very grateful for your presentation here.

Ms. ROUSSEL. I don't think people have ever seen me cry, so this will be a first on national TV.

Senator KENNEDY. There you go.

[Laughter.]

Ms. ROUSSEL. I am pretty tough, so this is interesting. I grew up with three brothers and was a high school principal, so I can do pretty much anything.

[Laughter.]

We would like to hold on to what we have and improve what we have. We are not sure what is going to happen. The longer it takes us to rebuild, the more we lose. Residents and students won't come back, teachers. We need financial help.

In legislative authority, my school board yesterday gave me unprecedented authority to do what needs to be done to quickly secure contracts, supplies, repairs. Anything else at any other level that can be done to expedite our powers in doing this is needed. We really are ready to begin and we believe that our hands are tied.

I have been known to speak directly, and I also have been one to say that money is not always the cure for the ills of public education. But in talking about facilities, textbooks, computers, supplies, attracting and maintaining a quality workforce, money is the answer.

I would also ask that you waive the requirements on the use of Federal funds that were allocated to us. If we had more leeway in using those funds, we could use them for the purposes we needed. That will be hard, because we are funded for the number of stu-

dents we have. Right now, we have none, or we may have a reduced number.

We are getting calls from across the country and it is a very generous Nation. I think the concern that comes to us, that we need some direction to give people on what we need besides after we get over survival, what do we need from there, and to elicit those funds to really target them for what we need.

I think we need to remember that everyone was affected—poor, middle class, rich. We all were supposed to leave. Some couldn't. If we can get schools, a third, a half, up and running, I can envision temporary housing coming in for the people to come to those schools, to start working, to help us rebuild. That temporary housing could be on school grounds. We could create small cities or whatever is needed, parks, playgrounds, churches.

When the schools open, the people will come back. When the schools open, business will come back. People choose where they live and work based on schools. Our people want to come home and we want them home. Jefferson has the best shot at being the new hub for an area devastated.

Our link to economic development, education has always had that link and the schools are the heart of our community. The State of Louisiana will suffer significantly from lessened revenue and then the effect will be felt in the United States. I have a quotation that says, the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility, and America has always recognized that it has great gifts and they have helped in 9/11 and in Southeastern Louisiana, we are asking for help now.

We have some lessons we learned, in case you want to hear those. I am keeping a book. I think we might have really detailed procedures after this, Senators, because we had hurricane preparedness, but nobody was ready for this.

Communication was crippling, not only for police. Government leaders, emergency leaders, public leaders, we could not communicate with each other. I guess there is a lesson there. I have three phones right now and every now and then, one works. But the lessons that we learned is that we were in danger without that and we couldn't mobilize anyone.

We have spoken to FEMA, and I would ask in regards to FEMA that you consider the following. We need a person there that understands the knowledge of schools, their needs and large-scale destruction. We need the actual documents in print, which I am sure we can find once we are up and running, that give us the rules and regulations for what happens in a disaster. While there are accommodations for disaster and good laws, we need to emphasize the extreme emergency and urgency. Whatever can be suspended in those bid laws needs to be suspended, and we are asking that the 25 percent reimbursement to FEMA be waived.

I have heard about the transfer of student records. I have good news. In Louisiana, we are all on one computer base, so we can look at everybody's data, and if you are on the same one, we can send it to you. We did retrieve some of our file servers and other important documentation and the State Department of Education has access to that, also.

I finish with in every challenge, there is opportunity, and there is opportunity to do things better. There is opportunity to do love and support our neighbors, our fellow Americans. The biggest opportunity comes in the infrastructure structures, community issues and inequities that we knew existed but could never bring to conclusion or resolution. We have the opportunity to correct all those things.

You have our commitment to do whatever it takes. Enable us to do what it takes. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Diane Roussel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DIANE ROUSSEL

Senator Frist and distinguished members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee, I am Diane Roussel, superintendent of the Jefferson parish Public School System in Louisiana. The Jefferson Parish Public School System educates more than 52,000 students in 84 schools and employs more than 6,000 teachers, administrators, and skilled workers. We are the largest employer in a parish of 450,000 residents. We share boundaries with Orleans, St. Tammany, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes—all of which were affected by Hurricane Katrina.

All of the above named school systems, including the Jefferson Parish Public School System, have been through some trying times, but nothing equals this. We have been through hurricanes, but nothing equal to this. We've been through floods, but nothing equal to this.

Of our 84 schools in Jefferson Parish, we expect $\frac{1}{3}$ to be usable as soon as the streets are cleared, utilities are restored, and our citizens can move back to their homes. We believe the rest will need repair, some significant repair, and one or two may be closed.

Jefferson was not plagued with rising water like New Orleans, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes. Some of those communities are literally gone. Our neighbors are all flooded. St. Tammany, to the north, sustained damage, but not to the extent as the rest of us. Their schools are slated to open in October. However, none of us are in good shape.

Jefferson will re-open schools as they are usable and capable of being financed throughout the 2005–2006 school year. Some will not be ready to re-open until 2006–2007.

With much of the New Orleans area, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard under water, the need for Jefferson to come back quickly intensifies. Jefferson has the best opportunity of becoming the temporary hub of economic development and education in the area. It can, and must, rebuild quickly—not only for itself, but for the surrounding parishes due to our proximity to the worst hit areas. They must deal with water before they can even begin to rebuild.

Let me now speak for all my sister parishes. All of us need to be rebuilt and to re-open as quickly as possible. Our combined student populations approach 200,000. Our combined workforces exceed 15,000 and are a direct, significant influence affecting the economy.

In order that we may move efficiently toward the restoration of education and the economic systems in our area, our needs can be delineated as follows:

- **Funding issues:** We are all being told by the State of Louisiana Department of Education that our minimum foundation program funds will be sent to other school systems at a time when we need those monies to pay employees, replace lost instructional materials, and rebuild ourselves.

Most, if not all of us, are sales tax dependent. There will be no sales tax collected for months to come. Materials for repairs will probably not be bought in our parishes. For Jefferson, that equals approximately \$12 million dollars per month. The other school systems are also negatively impacted by the loss of sales tax revenue.

How do we collect property taxes from people who cannot return to their homes or are out of work? More than 1 million people do not know answers to critical questions: where will they live, where will they work, where will their children go to school?

Our budgets are decimated.

We need additional Federal help to hold onto our people and be able to rebuild. Many of our employees will be put on unemployment. We will pay the unemployment. Our people are worried about the difference in their salaries and unemploy-

ment benefits, as well as their retirement and insurance benefits. We, too, are concerned.

We had finally gotten to the point in Jefferson of having 96 percent highly qualified and certified teachers.

What will happen now? How many will return if we take too long to rebuild? How many residents and students will return if we take too long to rebuild?

We need financial help from Federal and State sources.

In relation to legislative authority, my school board has given me unprecedented powers in this emergency to enable us to act quickly to secure contractors and supplies to repair and reconstruct schools.

We need anything and everything restricting superintendents' and school boards' powers at the State, Federal, and local levels to be suspended during this time of crisis. We are all ready to begin, but we feel that our hands are tied.

I have been one of those people known to speak directly. I have also been one that has stated that money is not always the cure for the ills of public education. But, when you are talking about facilities, textbooks, computers, and supplies, and about attracting and maintaining a quality workforce—money is the answer.

Our priorities must change.

Besides additional emergency Federal and State funding, we need waivers for the use of Federal funds we are currently entitled to to be able to direct them to areas of critical need. Even though some of us are not housing students or are housing a reduced number of students, let us use the money we were allocated to do what we need to do.

I implore you to waive the use of these funds for projects deemed necessary at the local school system level. Calls from across the country offering help are coming in. Here is what we can do with your help.

Housing is a Necessity

Remember that everyone was affected—poor, middle class, and rich. We need temporary housing for our people in our areas so the reopening and rebuilding of schools can occur. Help us secure this housing. Put it on school grounds. Parish officials can open parks, playgrounds, and even churches too can be used for this purpose.

This needs to happen as schools are opened so that our community can return. Our people in southeast Louisiana have a strong sense of community and family. They want to come home. We want them to come home. They want to be part of the rebuilding, once conditions are safe. And, they will be safe in Jefferson before they are safe elsewhere.

I ask the private sector to help with this housing and while specific supplies are needed by all and while we are asking for those, perhaps gift cards, gift certificates to meet specific needs and food discounts and coupons could be issued to supply what actually is needed. Sending these items across the country would be more efficient.

Economic development has always been linked to education. Our economic recovery is also linked to education. Re-open the schools and businesses and the workforce will return. Schools are the heart of every community. People decide where to live or not live based on area schools. If our schools do not re-open soon, our communities will be gone.

The State of Louisiana will suffer significantly from lessened revenue and from less oil and gas production. Our country will also suffer.

One of my favorite quotations is “the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility.”

The United States of America knows what that means. It has always recognized its gifts and has helped others. We helped our own in post-911, and it is time to help southeastern Louisiana. We are not too proud to ask and to say that we need help.

In regard to No Child Left Behind, quite honestly, we are not capable of working to meet these goals in 2005–2006. And, for some of us, we may not be able to do so in 2006–2007. I believe everyone knows this, understands the circumstances, and will agree to a waiver of deferment.

In the arena of communication, the lessons learned from and by all of us, whether we are police, Government leaders, or emergency personnel who could not communicate with each other, are lessons for Homeland Security. When communication is down, we are all at risk, we are all in danger, and we are unable to protect ourselves. Expensive telephones and services did not work.

And, in regards to FEMA: As we sat in a meeting with our State Superintendent Cecil Picard, superintendents of disaster school systems and receiving school systems, along with representatives of FEMA, the following became apparent:

- (1) Knowledge of schools and their needs, especially in terms of large scale destruction was lacking. Questions could not be answered.
- (2) We were recited passages from a lengthy document that we did not have. When asked if they brought copies, the answer was no. Are we to find this on our own?
- (3) Bid law was an issue with FEMA. We do not have the time or leisure to follow bid laws. And, this is what is required even in a crisis situation to be eligible for reimbursement. We need to emphasize to you the extreme sense of emergency and urgency that we are all feeling. Trust us, and suspend the rules for a period of time. We are in a time when trust is needed. We need to trust our neighbors. We need to trust our fellow Americans. We need to trust our public leaders.
- (4) We are asking that you suspend/eliminate the 25 percent reimbursement to FEMA required from us in order that we may use all of our funds to rebuild.

Finally, I was asked about the transfer of student records across the country. This is no problem in the State of Louisiana as the State can view all of our student records and can send them elsewhere, assuming we are on the same operating system or are all web based.

I will relay this concern to our State superintendent as I am sure that he is already working on it. My offices are currently housed in his building.

I conclude with, in every challenge, there is opportunity. We have the opportunity to love and support our neighbors, our fellow Americans. We have the opportunity to correct some of the infrastructures, structures, community issues, and inequities that we know have existed but could never bring to conclusion or resolution. We have the opportunity to bring the economy, culture, and natural and human resources of southeastern Louisiana back to America.

You have our commitment to do whatever it takes. Enable us to do what it takes. It will take all of us with trust in each other and trust in God.

I sincerely thank you for your time. And, if I can be of further service, I will gladly do so.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We heard from a receiving school and from a school underwater, but we need to hear a little bit from higher education, I think, at this point, so I am going to skip to Dr. Savoie for his comments next, then we will move on to Alabama Education.

STATEMENT OF E. JOSEPH SAVOIE, Ed.D., LOUISIANA COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

Mr. SAVOIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. We appreciate very much the opportunity to visit with you and extend our hand of partnership with Superintendent Roussel. She and I worked together on a variety of education reform initiatives and she is one of our best. Her words are sincere, heartfelt, and she walks the walk, not just talks the talk. So hang in there, Diane. We will get through it.

The impact for Louisiana postsecondary education, higher education, was significant. I have given the committee some aerial photographs of several of our campuses. I won't go through each one, but you can see the significance of the flooding on these campuses. These pictures were taken just 2 days ago, so these campuses have been underwater for over a week now. We had not had the ability to go on-site and do any sort of assessment, but you can imagine the ultimate condition of these facilities.

We had about—we had nine public campuses that were flooded, six private campuses in the Orleans and St. Bernard area that suffered these circumstances. That represents about 25 percent of our total enrollment in postsecondary education, just from those campuses.

But we also had many nearby campuses who didn't have the flooding problem, had wind and power problems. Some just opened

in the last couple of days. By the way, the ones that are flooded, we have no idea when they might be able to reopen. Some of our campuses were affected because of their proximity to the area. Southeastern Louisiana University, for example, in Hammond has about 7,000 of its students and faculty who live in Jefferson and Orleans Parish who have lost their homes and that has significantly affected them, as well. Nickles State, just south of there, served as a medical triage center and housed several thousand evacuees without power for a week, and they just got that on yesterday. We are very proud of the way the faculty and the staff responded there.

All of our campuses immediately came together to respond to the needs of these that were most affected. I think for purposes of context, and the superintendent referenced that, it is important to understand some of the traits that go with New Orleans and Louisiana, the family orientation. Ninety percent of the students at our public institutions are native-born and go to school and live near the campuses in which they attend. These students not only lost their colleges and universities, they lost their homes and their parents lost their jobs.

Our other campuses responded by immediately enrolling any displaced student at no additional cost, extending room and board to them at no additional cost. Interestingly, we had families move in with their sons and daughters in dormitories and we fed them in our cafeterias and continue to do so. All of our other campuses that were able, every available facility is being used for evacuation shelters. We are running two medical triage centers. We have served as staging sites for the helicopters that you saw doing the evacuations. Because of the significant native-born population, we continue to serve citizens from across the State.

We immediately moved to suspend all of our State-funded financial aid issues so that students wouldn't have those concerns. We have deferred any sort of payment. We immediately moved to try to secure our faculty who were displaced, as well, to commit to them job stability. We established a clearinghouse to identify them and to place them in other campuses. Our colleges have so far absorbed about 10,000 new students for which they were not prepared for which there is no funding, for which there is no requirement of tuition, but they are using reserves and other methods in order to serve those students.

Our colleges of education are providing pre-service teachers to serve as preschool instructors and run daycare centers in shelters. Our deans at the colleges of education are transforming our education courses from classroom to clinical environments so that we can put new student teachers into the shelters. Our community and technical colleges are offering workforce training in the construction trades at the evacuation shelters so that people can get meaningful jobs and help rebuild their own communities.

The point is that every one of our campuses was affected. Every single campus in some way was affected, some by the devastation of the storm, others by the tremendous financial pressures that have been placed upon them.

We have some immediate needs. Urgent immediate needs. We need significant regulatory relief on all sorts of student financial

aid. The Department has been responding with a series of decisions providing some greater flexibility, but we need maximum flexibility in handling financial aid.

As it relates to financial aid, most of the programs have been oriented around need-based aid, but I think in light of what has happened to us, we need a much broader definition of what need-based aid is. On the 2004 tax returns, families would report their income levels and you determine an expected family contribution rate in determination of what you might receive in Federal funds. We now have multiples of people who have lost their jobs, who have no source of income, who have lost their homes and cannot be expected to contribute family resources toward their children's education. So need-based aid is not just a lower-income need now. It crosses the whole economic spectrum of our students, so we need a much broader definition of that.

We need to maintain the financial viability of our institutions, those not only who are affected most dramatically, but those who have absorbed the additional responsibilities when we have been working with FEMA onsite and trying to get a sense of what we might be able to recover from their programs. FEMA's programs are mostly resources for repair, replacement of things, of tangible things. We have damaged schools. It is not just buildings and equipment. We have lost all the revenues that come from student attendance, things like tuition.

Just to give you an example, just the New Orleans institutions from the fall enrollment will lose over \$60 million this first semester. They also will lose payments toward all their auxiliary services, like dormitory payments, bookstores, cafeterias, recreation centers. There are no resources to maintain obligations in that regard. People have lost homes and they will also, many of them will lose their jobs. Students will not have opportunities to earn money to help pay for their education.

We have significant cost to our receiving institutions, from providing the shelters, providing help in the schools and workforce training. We have added significant expenses and there are no revenues. When you get into these situations, if Government does not help, then it will not get done.

We need a disaster assistance fund for our institutions. We think that on the short-term, this may be an understatement in the long-term. The short-term, we need at least \$500 million. We need a displaced student aid fund for students of all levels of another \$500 million.

Now, as I mentioned, FEMA deals with tangible things, but there are many intangible losses that you can't evidence on an expense sheet. We are at risk of losing the confidence and commitment of our faculty, and college faculty are very mobile by nature. We cannot afford to lose them. We have to persuade them to stay with us and help us to rebuild Louisiana. We are at risk of losing our competitive position in the marketplace. We are at risk of losing the confidence of our students and our communities.

And most importantly, I think we are at risk of losing hope for administrators, faculty, staff, and communities themselves. Remember the local nature of our institutions and the communities that they serve and the local nature of our students. Schools and

colleges and universities are the economic, social hubs of those communities. If these institutions are not viable, the communities will not be viable. Our institutions represent hope for a brighter future and a rebuilt future because in education, we are in the hope business. So we need your help to help us reestablish that hope.

That concludes my comments, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We have—what you talked about hits kind of close to home with our committee because we had an intern over the summer who was a new enrollee at Tulane and is now back here wondering what is happening to his life, and he is in the audience here, too, waiting to see what kind of decisions are going to be—

Mr. SAVOIE. Well, Tulane has announced that they will be unable to open this semester and hopefully sometime in the spring.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

And now, by teleconference, we have the Alabama Education Department Task Force, and we appreciate them coming through on short notice like this and participating in this way. It is unique, but if we could hear from the Task Force.

**STATEMENT OF EDDIE JOHNSON, Ph.D., DEPUTY STATE
SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION, ALABAMA**

Mr. JOHNSON. [via telephone.] Good morning, Mr. Chairman. My name is Eddie Johnson. I am part of the Alabama Education Task Force. I am here today with all of our Task Force members. We have been meeting on a daily basis to address the immediate needs of students who have been displaced due to Hurricane Katrina. Our State Superintendent, Dr. Joe Morton, is presently conducting a State Board of Education meeting and he is presently briefing the State Board members on the activities that are being conducted in Alabama.

First of all, we want to ditto everything that has been said relative to the needs of displaced students. Our major goal here in Alabama has been to ensure that we effectively communicate with the parents of displaced students and also the LEAs that are receiving these students to ensure that they understand what needs to be done to provide services. We have communicated these issues on a daily basis.

We have also done a survey of the numbers of displaced students. Presently, we have about 3,500 students throughout Alabama as of today and we expect those numbers to increase on a daily basis.

We have done a survey of needs to determine the needs that we must receive in order to address the needs for the students, and basically, we feel that in the educational arena here in Alabama, we will need funds to address this need for additional classrooms, funds to hire additional teachers, and there are facility repairs that we presently need funds for those purposes that were caused because of Hurricane Katrina. We will continue to monitor this process and progress and keep you posted, but our basic concern now is to address displaced Hurricane Katrina students. Thank you.

Senator KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, could I ask, sir, what your ballpark figure is in terms of the resources? This is going to be an evolving situation. What is your own kind of assessment? We have

heard with regard to the public colleges in Louisiana. Of course, that doesn't include the private colleges. It doesn't include the Historic Black Colleges. Do you have any ballpark figures, what you are talking about?

Mr. JOHNSON. We are presently assessing those needs. We have 130 school systems. The immediate needs of school system A may be different from that of B, so we will determine that hopefully by the end of the week. Some of the schools may be able to accommodate a few additional students without any additional funds and others may require a lot of funds. We have areas such as Mobile, Choctaw, and those on the Mississippi line that are in greater need than some of the other school systems, and so we hope to have that information tabulated by the end of the week. But right now, we just don't know. There are needs all over the State. We are working with the Governor's office and Homeland Security and FEMA on a daily basis to determine what those needs are, and as soon as we get them compiled, we will surely communicate that to all of the individuals that are involved.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. As you get those estimates, if you would share those with us, we would certainly appreciate that. Hopefully, others who might be listening throughout the country that have numbers, I am an accountant. I love the numbers. So if you would share those with us, we would appreciate it.

We also have with us the President of the Education Finance Council, so Kathleen Smith?

**STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN SMITH, PRESIDENT, EDUCATION
FINANCE COUNCIL, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I commend you and the rest of the committee members for bringing this distinguished group of people together. I think it makes clear both your commitment and ours to do whatever we need to do to help these students and families get their life back on track.

This devastation has clearly moved everybody and you have the sense both personally and as an organization of helplessness about what the right thing to do is.

I represent the Education Finance Council, which are nonprofit and state-based student loans secondary markets across the country. In preparing to come here today, I reached out to them and the consistent answer for all of them is, they want as much flexibility as possible. The last thing anybody in our business wants to do is worry about students getting dunning notices to an address that doesn't exist anymore or have them concerned about paying a student loan when they don't know where they're going to live that afternoon.

So flexibility is the key. The Department of Education, as has already been mentioned, has reached out to us and provided some flexibility initially. One way that we could advance that flexibility is by the amendment and then passage of the HEROES extension. There is a bill in place right now, a law in place right now that allows the Department of Education pretty broad waiver authority for natural disasters, but I think there is a technicality in that bill

that needs to be fixed. I don't think this is a declared Federal emergency, and that is what that bill is around right now.

So I think flexibility is important. I think allowing our members who are servicing students in their community to deal with them on an individual basis to address their needs, to make sure that we have information and guidance from the Department, again, who is doing a good job and establish their own Web site to act as a sort of central clearinghouse for information on this disaster, to allow us to make sure that we are, in fact, able to meet the individual needs of these families and students without concern 6 months from now that something is going to happen where an "i" wasn't dotted or a "t" wasn't crossed. So again, I am going to keep pushing the word "flexibility," because that is what I am hearing from my members that is really important.

Again, passage of the HEROES Act. And it is also important that people both here and listening to us know that when the news media goes away and when the next national story hits the press that those people are still going to be there and they are still going to need our help, and I think it is important that we all make clear to those folks that we are here for the long haul, both everyone around this table and the Federal Government, State Government, etc.

And again, my members, and I am sure I speak for the rest of my colleagues in the student loan business, that we are all here to try to serve those students.

Unfortunately, a lot of what we do deals with regulations and rules and requirements and technicalities and we want to make sure that we are not bogged down by those, that we don't stand on ceremony on some of these issues, and again, we provide that flexibility to extend deferment periods, extend forbearance periods, make sure that we are not creating a situation where a student does get their life back on track and they are in a worse financial condition than they were when they went in because of things like capitalizing interest and things.

So my main goal here is to express the need for that flexibility and offer our services and that of my colleagues to do whatever we need to do to help you, whether it is crafting legislation, working with the Department, working with this committee and the committees in the House to make sure that we are able to serve those students. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Mark Shriver of Save the Children for a rural aspect?

STATEMENT OF MARK SHRIVER, VICE-PRESIDENT AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, U.S. PROGRAMS, SAVE THE CHILDREN, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. SHRIVER. Thank you very much, Senator Enzi, and thank you to the members of the committee for hosting us this afternoon and this morning.

You have heard from a number of different folks with a number of different perspectives, from higher education to school superintendents that are dramatically affected by the results of this hurricane. I come to you as a representative of Save the Children, an entity that has specialized in disaster relief internationally, that

was created here in the United States as a result of the Depression, that actually started in Kentucky and now is in 12 States across this country and 40 counties across the world. We have been in the business of disaster relief for over 30 years, from the work that we did in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s to Darfur to our work in the tsunami at the end of this year and well into this year, as well as for the future.

What we really believe is necessary—we heard exactly what happens day in and day out and some of the issues that the schools are facing, but what we are proposing is that any relief effort focus in on the needs of kids. Senator Kennedy mentioned, and I know, Senator Enzi, your interest in early childhood education, particularly young kids are often forgotten. Preschool children are often forgotten in emergencies.

So what we would emphasize or ask the committee to consider strongly are three areas. One is the effect from a psycho-social perspective. Mental health services, as Senator Kennedy said in his opening statement, are very important, but what Save the Children has found in the disaster relief that we have done over the last 30-plus years is that roughly only 5 percent of the children will have mental health issues, but all the children will need to get back into a routine that is consistent as quickly as possible with what they had beforehand.

In the psycho-social effort that we have done in places like Indonesia as a result of the tsunami are involving the entire class. It is not pulling a kid out and stigmatizing that child for mental health services. Clearly, those services are needed, but what we are talking about is setting up psycho-social supports in the school system to help the entire grade, to help the entire school. It can be part of the curriculum and it can focus on social skills.

The second piece of what we are espousing and really advocating is the fact that kids need safe spaces as quickly as possible. I saw on the TV last night kids in the convention center here in Washington throwing a football around. Kids need to be kids, and what we need to do is to set up spaces, safe spaces, after-school programs, child care centers, and fully fund them to provide a structured routine that kids can get back into the normal lifestyle as quickly as possible.

As I mentioned, there are so many issues that need to be addressed, but I just want to again emphasize the fact that young kids, 0 to 5, are often left out. After kids start school, the kids that are not in the school, the preschool kids that are so important to making sure that they receive the social and emotional supports necessary to enter kindergarten ready to learn are often forgotten in disasters.

So those are the areas that we would hope that the committee would look at. Clearly, you need and hear about the necessary need for flexibility, but it is also very important, Senator Enzi, that we look at the additional resources that are necessary for children, for young children, in particular, the 0 to 5, and make sure that their social and emotional needs are addressed during the work that is going to happen over the next few months and over the next few years.

[The prepared statement of Mark Shriver follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK K. SHRIVER

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate HELP Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today, and for your leadership in bringing us together to discuss the needs facing our fellow citizens displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Save the Children began serving children in the United States in 1932 in response to the Great Depression. That was the last time Americans saw so many people displaced because of a natural disaster when drought forced several hundred thousand people out of the Great Plains which had become “the Dust Bowl.”

Today, Save the Children is recognized as a leading independent child-assistance agency creating real and lasting change for children in need in 12 States and in more than 40 developing countries. Save the Children is a global leader in child-focused emergency response and has been designing innovative community-based psychosocial support programs in crisis-affected countries for over 20 years, including most recently in response to the tsunami crisis in Asia.

Hurricane Katrina is one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. We know that there are critical needs for those displaced by Hurricane Katrina that still must be met: clean water, food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Children are among the most vulnerable in this situation, and their needs are often overlooked or misunderstood. As families are settled in new communities and children enrolled in schools, we know there will be an urgent challenge to provide support to the tens of thousands of children who have experienced the horrors of the disaster and are now without their homes, neighborhoods, routines, schools and in some cases families.

Save the Children has been in touch with State officials in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas and yesterday a small team left to assess the situation on the ground in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and one will be heading to Jackson, Mississippi early next week. While we will continue to refine our response based on these ongoing discussions and assessments, Save the Children, based on years of experience dealing with the needs of children caught in manmade conflicts and natural disasters, has identified 3 needs for children impacted by Hurricane Katrina: psychosocial support, safe spaces for children, especially those of pre-school age, and structured out-of-school time activities for children in grades K–8.

Psychosocial Support Through Schools

Once basic needs are met, it will be paramount to prevent the onset of psychological disorder, anti-social behavior and school-related learning problems that often affected children and adolescents in the aftermath of traumatic events, especially when their psychological needs are left unattended. Traditional mental health clinics and counseling approaches are not sufficient. Community mental health approaches are required if large numbers of children are to be reached in a timely manner in order to:

- Reduce the risk of depression, antisocial and other dysfunctional behaviors.
- Reestablish a sense of security and self-esteem.
- Facilitate resiliency and a return to normalcy.
- Use schools and other natural learning environments to decentralize mental health services.
- Screen for high-risk children and youth.

An immediate and short-term response to a sudden event can mitigate the impact of exposure and the potential onset of mood and anxiety disorders. Survivors—including children—of stressful events have the strength to express what has happened to them, when given the proper tools, a supportive environment and structured activities. For children, these can be dance, music, drawing, cooperative games, and other activities that enable them to explore basic emotions such as fear, loss, sadness, joy and courage while at the same time having fun with classmates and friends.

Entire classrooms, rather than individual “victims,” are selected for participation. Teachers (or school counselors) are trained to lead these highly structured activities.

By implementing a structured activities program as a part of a school’s curriculum, not only can large numbers of children in need be reached quickly, but the potential stigma of receiving mental health support also is reduced.

Evaluations of the impact of Save the Children’s program on children in crisis after a devastating earthquake in Turkey, conflicts in Nepal and the West Bank and Gaza and the tsunami in Indonesia found significant improvements in their attitudes and behavior, including:

- Fewer traumatic stress symptoms, such as nightmares, bed-wetting and emotional numbing.
- Improved concentration.

- Improved academic performance.
- Improved school attendance.
- Elimination of withdrawn and antisocial behavior.
- Improved relations between teachers and students.
- Improved relations between students in the group.
- Increased self-esteem and sense of stability.

Save the Children recommends that Congress provides funding for schools serving displaced children for:

(1) Implementation of child-focused mental health strategies and psychosocial support programs for children and youth affected by Hurricane Katrina.

(2) Training and technical assistance related to psychological recovery and healing for children and adolescents and implementing psychosocial programs in schools and classrooms.

Safe Spaces for Children/Pre-school Programming

During the acute phase of a crisis, such as Hurricane Katrina, children are vulnerable due to separation from their families, displacement from their homes, the shock of their experiences and disruption of routines, especially schools, recreation centers, sports teams and clubs.

Moreover, these children are often left unattended as parents or caregivers, if they are not separated from them, seek life-saving support and attempt to rebuild their lives. From Save the Children's global experience with children in crisis, we have learned that communities know how to protect their children best, and they frequently prioritize the rapid establishment of safe places to play and learn for children while educational and recreational facilities are being rebuilt or restored.

One of Save the Children's innovations in crisis situations is the rapid, cost-efficient establishing of safe places for children to play, learn and recover their sense of routine and normalcy. Safe spaces have been provided for young children from such previous crises in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s through the crisis in south Asia for the surviving tsunami children and displaced children in Darfur, Sudan.

During the acute emergency of Hurricane Katrina, "Safe Spaces" should cover all ages of children. This could be done in shifts or simultaneously depending upon the community and children. During the acute phase, staff/volunteers would be briefed on child safety, trained in the organization of basic activities, psychosocial support for children, and systems of referral in regard to issues such as family separation and health.

From our experience, "Safe Spaces" normalize children's lives by providing regular structured activities, including recreational, educational and psychosocial activities. However, "Safe Spaces" also fill another void in child-focused emergency response: The needs of pre-school aged children are rarely served in emergencies. As primary and secondary school students return to school, Save the Children recommends transitioning "Safe Spaces" to serve the needs of pre-school children.

Early Childhood Development activities are important for both the child as well as the caregiver. Traumatized parents are often unable to provide sufficient care for younger children and the continuation of "Safe Spaces" would address this. Additionally, from experience, caregivers will need some form of daycare as they re-establish their lives. For Save the Children, daycare in such situations should be more than just child play but address their psychosocial needs, to prepare them for schooling and living in post-crisis environment.

Save the Children recommends that Congress:

(1) Makes a priority the rapid creation of "Safe Spaces" in temporary shelters and the training of "Safe Space" staff/volunteers to address the needs of the children and allows the use of funds under grants given for the support of temporary and long-term shelters.

(2) Provides additional funding for training and technical assistance for Early Head Start and Head Start Centers serving displaced children and children affected by Hurricane Katrina to address the children's psychosocial needs.

(3) Provides funding to communities as they rebuild and re-establish needed services for children, such as daycare facilities, youth centers and gyms, through the provision of materials and training.

Structured Out-of-School-Time Programs for Children in Grades K-8

Save the Children provides after-school programs for children living in some of the most remote rural regions of the United States—including several in the Mississippi River Delta region, not far from the worst of Hurricane Katrina's devasta-

tion. As a result of Hurricane Katrina, large numbers of school-age children have been uprooted and displaced. Many are homeless and will have less time in school and fewer opportunities for quality structured academic and recreational activities. Some will remain in temporary housing for many months, and even those who are able to attend schools in Texas, Tennessee and other States will require special support because of the disaster they have survived and the unfamiliar locations in which they find themselves.

The families and schools to whom these children have turned also will need training and support in order to provide the extra academic, recreational and nurturing opportunities that these children will need to help to bring normalcy back into their lives and restore their emotional well-being and sense of security. We are already hearing that many districts will be overcrowded and have to adopt a "split session" for the school day. Children will be left with substantial idle time on their hands before and after school. Filling that time with academic and recreational activities that support their school achievement as well as emotional recovery is a critical need.

Children who participate in after school programs demonstrate better school attendance, more positive attitude towards school work, better interpersonal skills, reduced dropout rates, less time spent in unhealthy behaviors, and improved grades. All of these results in and of themselves are positive, but put in the context of the hurricane victims take on the added benefit of helping restore a sense of routine and stability.

Save the Children recommends that Congress provides:

(1) Additional funding to create more 21st Century Community Learning Centers in communities serving large numbers of children displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

(2) Provide training and technical assistance in psychosocial support to 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other entities supporting the educational and recreational needs of displaced children.

Conclusion

Save the Children stands ready to make its experts and experience in child-focused community mental health strategies, available to Federal, State and local authorities to advise on both an overall approach to psychological recovery and healing for children and adolescents, and on implementing psychosocial, "Safe Space," pre-school and out-of-school time programs for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

The urgent needs of children victimized by Hurricane Katrina must remain at the forefront of our Nation's response to this unprecedented natural disaster. We know from experience that the minds and hearts of children are very resilient, but they must be attended to quickly. A return to normalcy and routine with activities designed to help them deal with their trauma will help enormously. It will take years to rebuild damaged homes, businesses and infrastructure. We won't have to wait that long to see results in making our children whole again if we act swiftly and give them the right support.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

That is a good transition into health, and we have by way of videoconference Dr. Jennifer Leaning.

STATEMENT OF JENNIFER LEANING, PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL HEALTH, HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Dr. LEANING. [by videoconference.] Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for organizing this roundtable and bringing together so many thoughtful and dedicated people, many clearly deeply affected by the local catastrophe.

I am speaking from Boston, from Harvard, clearly not in the epicenter. I study and teach about disasters and have been involved in disaster response for 25 years and also I am very connected with the response of the American Red Cross and a number of other NGOs and organizations that are now working in the area. I also am on the staff of Brigham and Women's Hospital, which is one of the bigger hospitals in the Boston area and one of the Harvard teaching hospitals and I am very well aware of the work that we

are doing to support the local medical and public health professionals who are working in the affected region.

I have some comments that are related to the short-term and the long-term. In the category of short-term, based on my understanding of how disasters are planned for and responded to, I think there is the need for Congress to make sure that what we now have in place in Louisiana and Mississippi in particular is an effective procurement joint operations center that links local, State, and Federal Government authorities and capacities, that has good lateral integration between the civil and the military assets, and that that joint operations center, which I know is beginning to evolve now in both States, be given full authority to make things happen, to cut through all the red tape, and to deploy resources and money to the various groups, agencies, communities, and individuals who are doing so much extraordinary work in the affected area.

As you have heard from some of the distinguished people who have already spoken, there is enormous commitment and initiative at the local level. What is happening now in these early days of the response is probably through an enormous amount of good will and an enormous amount of struggle to try to make things happen quickly that should have been planned for prior to this.

There is now still such confusion and such organizational overlap that it is very difficult to get things done at the sites where they must happen, and what is now essential to understand is there is the need to separate out some of the things that have to be addressed later and some of the things that can't wait, and I think what we are hearing from the local actors is that this very precious part of our country must be attended to so that local people feel that they have a chance to rebuild and return as quickly as possible.

The second major point that I would like to make in the short term, that is in addition to making sure there is a coherent command and control at the State level that links to all the other players, is the Congress to work with the administration to get out a message about what is our national strategy about resettlement and reintegration for the evacuees who have been sent to other places of temporary safety and security. There is clearly fear that a large number of these people will not return, or may not return. There is uncertainty in the receiving communities about what their role should be in terms of attaching temporarily, attaching permanently. What are the pros and cons of this?

I think that it is essential that Congress explore this quite deeply and carefully and in a nonpartisan way. It is going to take time to figure out the national strategy. I am talking about a national philosophy and a national message that will allow all of us in this country to understand what the plan is for the reconstruction and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast region.

I am aware, for instance, that in our State of Massachusetts, there are hundreds of well-organized and deeply-committed volunteers, local and State agencies grouped around Otis Air Force Base, and over the last 3 or 4 days, which is not a long period of time, but we have taken all of these people offline to go to Otis Air Force Base, there has been a question of are we getting 2,500 people from the affected area or are we not? It is fine that there be this uncer-

tainty in these short and early days. Everybody recognizes that. But I think over the next couple of weeks, a sense of what our agenda is going to be on these issues needs to be crafted, and I can't think of a better forum for this or a more appropriate forum for this than the series of hearings and Congressional discussions that I know are underway.

The third short-term issue that I think needs to be paid attention to is, speaking now from my medical and public health background, and here I am including issues of mental health, there need to be under this joint operations center a medical task force that link medical and public health and mental health providers so that there is a sense of coherence about the deployment of people to the areas that need medical and public health assessment as well as mental health assessment, a place where all the volunteers from around the country can find an assignment and a place to go and a short- and long-term plan developed for the rebuilding and resupply of the medical establishment in these areas.

Many of the sheltered population are elderly. There are a lot of children. There is a fairly significant burden of current medical conditions and stable—provided there are medications delivered and supplied appropriately—stable mental health issues. I know this in part because I have been working with the American Red Cross, and I know there are some officials in the room from the American Red Cross, in helping to deploy medical and public health people to assess the conditions in the Red Cross shelters.

The response for sheltering for the community and from the communities like the response has been phenomenal, but there are important medical and public health and mental health needs that need to be identified and then a plan for addressing them, and the needs are different in Louisiana and Mississippi and we can go into that in more detail at another time.

The other big point I would like to make is around the evacuation of New Orleans. There continue to be, from all reports, something on the order of 10,000 or 15,000 people who are still there. The issues of the spread of disease through the water, I think are present and important, but the argument from my perspective for helping people understand why they have to leave is that they are not going to be able to live for very much longer in an empty city where the focus of the authorities is on cleanup and infrastructure rebuilding. There are not going to be supplies of food and water and capacity to deliver medical care to this remnant population.

So I think the argument needs to be made more that in the long-term, you can't stay here, rather than it is an enormous emergency for you to leave right now. That might allow for more dialogue, a need not to haul people out of their homes in a way that is likely to create some resentment and leave a lasting sense of authority acting somewhat too vigorously, although I recognize there is a need to bring people out. What I am suggesting is that it be done in a slightly more long-term way.

I also think that it needs to pay attention to the reasons why people are holding on there. One of the reasons is many of them still have pets, seeing-eye dogs or just family pets. There are approximately, at my estimate, at least 50,000 pets still left in the New Orleans area. If there were a way of linking the persuasion

of people to leave with the support and evacuation of their pets, it might be easier to get at least some of that remnant population to leave voluntarily.

And then I had a larger longer-term, short-term point to make, which is that everyone who is engaged in this immediate response needs to be supported through the possibility of relief rotations. This country is transfixed by this disaster. There are hundreds of thousands of people around the country who have good skills who will get the permission to leave their jobs and go down to help. I know that the hospitals in the Boston area are developing teams that will go down to the major hospitals and clinics in the area to provide 5, 6, 10 days of relief and offer rotation for the health professionals who have worked so valiantly and who are now exhausted. I know that that must be the case for all the other providers and people who are in the area.

So if there could be a way of organizing or at least giving permission from a Federal message base to say the need to relieve and rotate off is one that is paramount right now and that issues of licensure and liability and reciprocity will be reduced to the absolute minimum so that people can go down and provide the help that so many of us around the country would like to provide.

I have two main points to make on the long-term, and I appreciate the chance to speak at this point. One is that we may need to pay attention to repairing our national capacity to get things done. I do think that there is a need to explore quite thoroughly why there has been a failure of advance planning and a failure to anticipate and build in the process to defend that region from a devastating hurricane and a devastating flood and breach of the levees. It has been anticipated in many disaster scenarios.

I fear that FEMA has not helped the State and local authorities develop robust plans and the resources to carry out those plans. This needs to be looked at. It needs to be looked at carefully and, I believe, soon. But it will take time and it will require Congressional authority and investigative power of Congress.

I also think it is important—this is the second long-term point—in everything we do now at the national level and all the way down to the community level, it is necessary for our Nation to restore its sense of itself, that we are not just a rich Nation, but that we are a caring Nation and that these issues of misery, class divide, racial disparity that have come to the surface now in the wake of this terrible disaster, these issues get on the national agenda and stay there.

This, as some of your distinguished panelists have already said, this is an opportunity as well as a major crisis and I would hope that we could look again at what it is that makes this country great and pay attention to our respect for the vulnerable, the dignity that we must restore to the weak, and insist upon the fact that some of the things that we saw in those first few days in New Orleans and perhaps in Mississippi not be allowed to happen again in the future of our Nation. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Next, we will hear from Lisa Cox. Lisa?

STATEMENT OF LISA COX, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR FEDERAL AFFAIRS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. Cox. Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. We at the National Association of Community Health Centers are very thankful for you extending this invitation to us to participate here this morning.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about what health centers in the Gulf Coast area, and indeed around the country, are doing to help medically underserved individuals and families cope with Hurricane Katrina.

I think it is important to note that health centers in the Gulf Coast States—Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—but health centers all across the country are first responders in this case. Health centers are located in areas where the hurricane has hit the hardest and we are serving the most severely underserved in this tragedy.

At the very same time, these very health centers in the Gulf States are those that have suffered the most damage, and I can go through some of that for you. So while we are in the path of the storm, definitely, what health centers are striving to do and what they have always done is to be a shelter in the storm.

Really briefly, in the Gulf Coast States, we have approximately 54 health centers in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana that have satellite clinics. They have about 302 satellite clinics, some of them in schools, in fact, which serve approximately three-quarters of a million patients annually.

As we have done our damage assessments over this week, we estimate that approximately 100 health center sites have been affected in some way. Some of them are underwater in New Orleans. Health centers serve approximately 18,000 people in about nine sites all over the city. What we have heard is many of those sites are underwater or have damage and are not obviously open.

In Mississippi, there are about 10 sites that have received damage. In the Gulfport area, in Biloxi, those health centers are completely destroyed and those health centers did serve about 30,000 people. So it is catastrophic damage that we are dealing with.

Even in Alabama, in the Mobile area, our health centers there have received unbelievable damage and will be closed for several weeks. Many will be closed for longer, and so that is a significant burden and a resource and a health care home that is not there now for medically underserved individuals and families.

At the same time, some of the sites in the Gulf Coast area, and then in the region, in Tennessee, in Arkansas, in North Carolina, are beginning to see obviously vast numbers of evacuees. In Tennessee, they are, I think, expecting to see about 20,000 evacuees to their area and, in fact, are mobilizing to send their mobile vans out to go to the shelters and go to the region and treat people.

In North Carolina, they actually have a physician at the health center who went over and helped during the tsunami in Sri Lanka who is preparing to go down to the region and provide care and actually has contacted physicians from Sri Lanka who are coming over to help.

Health centers all across the country, especially Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, are not only seeing evacuees, but are mobilizing to actually go down and provide that respite care in those areas that are most severely affected. The health center family is a very giving family with open arms, and so health centers all across the country, even from as far away as Alaska, are trying to figure out what they can do, whether it is sending supplies, whether it is figuring out how to send doctors and other medical professionals to help. Health centers in Massachusetts, for example, have teams of providers that are ready to go and ready to go down to the area and treat people wherever they need to be treated.

So given that, and as we move forward to talk about solutions, we have been thinking and health centers have been thinking a lot about this issue, and so I will just mention several quick points and several quick ideas where we feel Congress in particular and the Federal Government can be helpful to try to restore and rebuild and make sure that current health center patients and those who are displaced can get the health care that they need.

Congress should make funding available to rebuild, restore, and replace health centers that have been severely damaged, and we are still, again, providing, or trying to compile a needs assessment. But, we estimate right now that cost at being \$65 million. That is for the three Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, health centers most severely damaged.

Existing health centers, as I said earlier, are taking displaced patients and displaced individuals and families and providing care to them. That, we estimate that we could serve as many as 400,000 additional patients in the region, and that is going to be a significant cost, as well.

And then, also, to ensure that new health centers, applications that are currently in the pipeline at HRSA that were scheduled to be funded on December 1 of this year can come online immediately. What that means is 19 new health centers are now in line and have been approved to receive funding. If we could get those online in that Gulf Coast region, that would be wonderful and a way to do that would immediately help.

Two other quick points. We would love to have Congress help health centers receive needed medical supplies. For the past week, we have been receiving calls at NAC and, indeed, calls at our primary care associations across the country and our health centers that they need medical supplies. They need insulin. They need hepatitis vaccines. So anything that the Government, that Congress can do in that regard would be very much appreciated.

The last thing I will mention is that we feel that there needs to be an extension of the Federal tort claims liability coverage for health centers. This is medical liability coverage that health centers currently receive. We have been working with HHS on this issue and they have indicated to us that FTCA coverage is only available within a State, which severely limits health center personnel who are already all across the country, are gearing up to go, it severely limits their ability to do that, to go down to the affected region. And so any help that Congress and the committee specifically can provide in working with HHS to get over that barrier would be very much appreciated.

I am going to stop right there. Thank you very much.

Senator KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, could I just ask very quickly—

The CHAIRMAN. Certainly.

Senator KENNEDY. [continuing.] Do you anticipate a greater demand now that health insurance is basically job related? Since so many of these jobs are going to be gone, people will have lost their health insurance and, therefore, a place which has really been the lifeline have been these health centers and there will probably be an additional challenge for you, as well?

Ms. COX. Absolutely. That is an important point to make. Health centers serve about 15 million people who are medically underserved all across the country yearly. Approximately 6 million of our patients are underserved, or uninsured, and we do expect that to go up as people move, they are displaced, they are without their jobs. We expect that number to go up markedly.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

A little bit of a different direction in health, we will call on Dr. Paul Anthony of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association.

STATEMENT OF PAUL ANTHONY, M.D., CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH AND MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

Dr. ANTHONY. Chairman Enzi, Senator Kennedy, on behalf of PhRMA and our member pharmaceutical companies, thank you for inviting me to participate in this important roundtable.

We are committed to ensuring that the medicines that people need get to them quickly and safely.

The CHAIRMAN. Your mike isn't on. Thank you.

Dr. ANTHONY. Sorry. Our member pharmaceutical companies are committed to ensuring that the people who need their medicines get it quickly and safely delivered wherever it is needed in the country, either in the disaster area or where the people are being evacuated.

When we talk about medicines, we are talking about things like childhood asthma medications, which may not require special handling, to refrigerated insulin, which requires very careful handling throughout the distribution chain, to experimental medicines that may be used in clinical trials for rare cancers, and patients who are at Tulane, for example, that treatment has been interrupted and we need to make sure that those medicines get to them.

Because of the magnitude and the breadth of this type of demand, we have to have a flexible response in terms of how we get medicines to people. So we are working with State and Federal agencies to make sure that medicines like vaccines, where there is a great need to make sure that is carefully controlled so that in a response to, let us say, some show on CNN, you don't get emergency orders for tens of thousands of vaccines for a particular location, only to find that vaccine just being stored in a warehouse. So we are working very carefully with the State and Federal agencies to make sure that that type of medicine is distributed appropriately.

We are working with the private sector distribution chain to make sure that retail pharmacies, like Walgreen's, which is here today, and a number of others who have stepped up to make sure that medicines are distributed, that our companies are backfilling that private distribution chain to make sure that they have the inventory levels that we need.

We are working with the voluntary and relief organizations, like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, who I know are here today, to make sure that the shelters that they set up have access to the medicines that they need.

We are doing all of this today. We are going to continue to do it. As has been emphasized earlier this morning, we are trying not to be part of the red tape, so we are using corporate aircraft where that is appropriate to deliver medicines to Mississippi. We are working with the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy to convert an old Delchamps grocery store into a warehouse so we can use their refrigeration facilities to store the medicines that require refrigeration.

We are doing everything we can. We have already donated over \$45 million worth of medicines and cash to the affected groups. But despite all that we are doing, I am still getting individual reports literally every 15 minutes of individual cases of people who are not getting their medicines and are suffering.

I will give you one that just came across this morning of a patient that was evacuated to a VA hospital. It turns out they treated the patient. A social worker wants to discharge that patient with medication and this particular patient is not a VA beneficiary and there is some confusion about whether they are eligible and whether they can fill it from that pharmacy.

We are getting those types of requests with a question of can our companies help, and again, I want to assure you that our companies are standing by. We are going to help in every way we can. We look forward to working with this committee and with the country to again ensure that anyone who needs medicines gets the medicine they need. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Moving on down to a more local level yet, Kenneth Weigand with Walgreen's. Your microphone isn't on.

**STATEMENT OF KENNETH WEIGAND, VICE-PRESIDENT FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES, WALGREEN'S**

Mr. WEIGAND. Thank you, Chairman Enzi, Senator Kennedy, committee members, for the opportunity to be here today. I guess I am speaking both on behalf of Walgreen's as a medical services provider and as an employer.

Walgreen's is a nationwide retail drugstore chain. We have approximately 4,800 stores in 47 States and Puerto Rico. We have 74 stores employing approximately 2,200 employees in the Gulf area. Several of these locations remain closed either because they were severely storm damaged or looted or both, resulting in displacement of hundreds of our employees.

My comments are focused both on restoring pharmacy and health care services, providing relief to the region, and also taking care of our employees.

First, with regard to our patients and relief efforts, immediately after the hurricane hit, Walgreen's provided the region with truckloads of water and essentials. We continue to deliver OTC medications and prescription medications. The example was given of insulin. We are trying to provide as many of those services as we can.

The key really is getting our stores open so that we can provide these services. Several are up and running on generators and as the power gets back on, they are switching over to local power. Several are being operated by voluntary employees who don't work at that particular location but have risen to the challenge and have come to work at an alternate location.

We are, because of our size, we are able to provide prescription services nationwide. All of our pharmacies are linked, so thankfully, our patients can go to really any Walgreen's location around the country and get prescription services.

With regard to our employees, thankfully, we have been able to welcome many of them back. Our stores serve as a beacon in many areas, and when they see the Walgreen logo, they know where to go.

Again, because of our scope, we are able to put people back to work at alternate locations. We have established phone banks and Web sites to help us both locate missing employees, get them reunited either with their home store or with an alternate location, and provide them information on assistance and benefits.

To allow people to work at some of these locations, we have trucked in RVs. We had to go to Canada to get, I believe, 50 RV vehicles and are driving them down as we speak so that our people have a place to stay as they are working. We also have a network of voluntary housing. Many of our employees have stepped up and opened their homes to their fellow employees.

We are providing monetary assistance to our folks. We have a charitable organization—it is called the Walgreen Benefit Fund—that was established to provide financial assistance in situations of this kind. We are also able to provide emergency loans through our credit union to our folks. Thankfully, we have been able to continue benefits and provide Employee Assistance Plan counseling.

With regard to what the committee and Congress could do for us, things of immediate need, I believe are probably outside the purview of Congress. The immediate need is access to our stores. As I mentioned, we are trucking supplies in. In several instances, our trucks have been stopped at checkpoints and challenged because of curfew regulations, what have you, so we have had to go through some efforts to get permission for our trucks to get in, both to provide services for our employees and deliveries.

Kind of on a related nature is fuel. We can get the trucks there, but because of local gas shortages we are worried about getting them back out so they can make return trips, and also for our employees to get back and forth to work.

And once they are there, security for our store locations. In many areas, it is quite dangerous for both our people to go to work and for our customers to get in and out of the store.

So those are really the immediate needs. Longer term, the professor mentioned licensure and reciprocity. As you know, pharmacy is a highly-regulated business, so any assistance with regard to al-

lowing our stores to serve out-of-state patrons who are on some kind of Government assistance would be welcome.

And really what it comes down to is getting people at a comfortable enough level to be able to come back to work. We think allowing them to work is the key to getting their lives back together, so it is all the basics of supplemental income replacement, relocation, resettlement benefits, housing, transportation, and family services so our people don't have to worry about their families, can get back to work, be productive, and also serve the public. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Our committee has a huge jurisdiction and we are running out of time here, definitely running out of time.

Senator BURR. A quick question?

The CHAIRMAN. A quick one.

Senator BURR. Just a very quick one. We have all heard the horror stories of patients who have received care. A physician treats without any history of what they were taking and the patients not knowing what they were taking. Do medical professionals have the ability to contact a Walgreen's store, check a patient's records to see what medications they were on?

Mr. WEIGAND. Yes, they do. Yes.

Senator BURR. Thank you.

Mr. WEIGAND. Thank you. The committee has huge jurisdiction. We have covered health and we have covered education. We haven't covered the labor aspect yet. That is the next step here, and from Wyoming, we have Charlie Ware who is the Chairman of the Workforce Development Council. I would also mention that we have Kathy Emmons, who is the Director of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Development. So we appreciate your being here, too, and any comments that you can share with us later.

Charlie?

**STATEMENT OF CHARLIE WARE, CHAIRMAN, WYOMING
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, CASPER, WYOMING**

Mr. WARE. Thank you and Senator Kennedy. I am the private sector person who chairs the Workforce Development Council for Wyoming. There are 50 of us in the country. I can take a little broader look at this because we are not as directly involved as everybody here in this situation.

I would offer two solutions. I will give a couple of anecdotes related to that. I asked Kathy to join me so that we can make decisions quickly based on this meeting, and also that I don't commit to something that I don't have the authority to, and Kathy can tell me that.

The other thing that I want to share that comes to offering the solution is on August 24 in Portland, OR, I assumed the Vice Chairmanship of all the workforce State boards in the country and I was told it is going to be two meetings a year and a couple phone calls. Here I am today speaking for Jim Hardegree, who is the Workforce Chair in Georgia.

One thing I would like to offer is that the workforce local boards and State boards across the country, especially in the 23 States

that have offered to bring people, we need to be coordinated, too, and let somebody know what we can do and what we cannot do.

Before coming here, I talked to—I called Arkansas, I called Florida, I called Georgia, and I called Colorado, just because I know those people very quickly. They are busy, busy, busy, and they answered my calls very quickly. Arkansas's people, when I talked to them, they were in an armory taking names and Social Security numbers of people. They were at, again, that first-tier level, and what we have been talking about today right now is the first tier, that immediate relief and rescue. We are not at the next stage of placing people and training people in the workforce area. Florida's comments was they have taken over and assisted in Southern Mississippi on workers' compensation claims and training people.

Florida has a good idea that I think all the workforce boards can do, and that is to train and send people back to wherever they might want to be. Again, training centers in the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama areas are gone, also, so there is no way to take care of that. People do want to go back and rebuild, especially in the heavy trades, all the construction trades, to build.

Colorado has made a decision, and these are just things that need to happen as far as having a plan in place, they have deferred the actual—the State board has actually deferred to their local board in Denver to handle all the mechanics of the workforce. They have about 180, 200 people right now in Denver. One of the problems they are seeing is they have eight of those people who have actually no documentation and they don't know where they came from. So the system has to build itself out a little bit.

I, through my Governor's recommendation, started a driller's school in Casper because of the 1,000 people a year we need to drill gas wells, and we have two people from Mississippi in the class next week and how did we get them? They called us. We are, quote, "not in the system," but they called us and we will definitely take them.

There is a major consideration that needs to be looked at as we look at placing people in the future in other parts of the country, in other States. Wyoming and the Northern tier of this country is pretty cold in the wintertime and our instructor for this class is from Lafayette, LA. He has been in Wyoming for 14 months. He has been through that one winter and he is very clear that it is not for everybody. And we looked at Utah, we looked at Colorado, we looked at Wyoming, we looked at Washington State, we looked at the Dakotas, etc. That is a factor in dealing with these people that has to be considered.

What I would suggest as solutions, which I have talked to my national staff now that I am in this national Vice Chair position, is to get a phone conference call either next Monday or Tuesday, inventory what the workforce boards could do in the different States, tally that up, and I don't know, Senator Enzi, if we give it to you, but that somebody can know what is going on, because I feel in many cases it is kind of herky-jerky.

Everybody wants to help, as you said, Senator. We have two people who want to drive a bus from Casper loaded with food and bring people back, and Governor Freudenthal called them and said, that is a great idea, but it doesn't fit really in the system. We need

to be part of that system. So I think that is a point. But I will get that done with my national staff and have that available, maybe for the Department of Labor.

The second thing, and I really wasn't even thinking about this as I came, but I think it is important—it always has been important, but there is more of an urgency, I think, to look at passing the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization, and I know the two of you have worked very, very hard on that. But that whole section of dislocated workers takes on a whole new meaning, I think, as we have this national crisis. You know, we can get it passed, get it into conference, work out the details, and have a vehicle that all the States could operate from. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. While you do your inventory of capabilities, we will see if we can get that done.

Mr. WARE. OK.

The CHAIRMAN. Maurice Emsellem? Mr. Emsellem?

STATEMENT OF MAURICE EmsELLEM, PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT LAW PROJECT, NEW YORK, NY

Mr. EmsELLEM. [via telephone.] Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Kennedy, members of the committee for this chance to testify, to speak with you today. I am going to try to address the basic questions that were posed by the committee, what are the most urgent needs facing the families and what steps can Congress take to help meet some of these needs.

I wanted to start off just by mentioning that our organization, the National Employment Law Project, our main offices are actually located in lower Manhattan and we were actively involved in the relief effort after September 11. In that case, despite the incredible devastation, families still had their homes, and probably most importantly, they still had their local communities to rely on for help and to find the strength to get by, to continue through the crisis.

In this case, the evacuees have been totally uprooted from their community and their jobs for, we really don't know for how long a period of time, which means that they are almost entirely dependent, or in many cases entirely dependent on what help is provided by the Government, by relief agencies, and by employers.

And obviously, as others have mentioned, finding a good job means everything to these families, to give their hope back and to give their dignity back after this experience.

So in terms of some of the most urgent needs, what we have been focusing on is trying to help the families and groups that are servicing these families to get the financial assistance that they need at sufficient levels to care for their families, and then also to get back on their feet and find a good job.

Not far down the road, as Mr. Ware mentioned, we also believe that job training, access to higher education has to be a major priority as families who lost all connection to their jobs start settling down and making some very hard choices about how and, in many cases, where to move on and what occupations will support them and their families in the long run after this experience.

So what are some of the steps that Congress can take to help with the families? First, I want to mention, based on what we have heard from groups in Texas and other States that are working with some of the evacuees, it is important to emphasize that the State unemployment agencies in all the States—in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, Georgia—have been working very hard to successfully get their telephone claims taking processes up and running to process the unemployment claims and the disaster unemployment claims, and that is very critical.

In addition, the evacuees, especially in Houston, have been given the in-person help that they need, which is very critical in a situation like this, to be able to have that in-person contact, to get folks in the system and start processing these claims. It is just a major effort to start getting the information necessary for all those folks to process their claims despite major obstacles in the Astrodome and elsewhere—limited phones, limited access to computers, and all that. So the in-person assistance is very important and it is clear that that is happening in a lot of places. So that is a very good thing.

In terms of what Congress can do, just to take a quick step back, it is important to mention that we are reminded, vividly now, that we have lived through, in 4 short years, two major disasters. But unfortunately, really, we don't have a Federal disaster assistance program that provides cash assistance, financial assistance to the unemployed. Instead, as a result of major changes in the law in the late 1980s in the disaster unemployment assistance law, the disaster program is the State unemployment insurance programs. Disaster unemployment assistance is only available to those people who don't qualify for State unemployment in their State, like the self-employed and other categories of workers.

So in New York, for example, after September 11, just 3,300 families collected disaster unemployment assistance after September 11. That is about \$13 million in benefits. Another 3,300 people were denied disaster unemployment assistance because of restrictions in the law. So that \$13 million compares with about \$1.5 billion that was spent by the State to pay for UI benefits as a result of 9/11.

So given the scope of these latest disasters, and Lord knows all this can happen again, what is needed, we believe, is a quick fix to make Federal disaster unemployment assistance, not State unemployment insurance, the main form of assistance to those who lost their jobs due to the disaster. So that involves a few things.

That involves, first, providing what we call DUA, disaster unemployment assistance benefits, to all those out of work because of the disaster, which means removing the requirement that folks first go on their State unemployment insurance program if they qualify.

Second, it is necessary, absolutely necessary, to establish a minimum Federal disaster unemployment benefit of at least the average State unemployment benefit, the average unemployment benefit paid in the States, which right now is \$270. That compares with the average benefit in the hurricane States, which ranges from \$170 to \$194. Those, unfortunately, are literally the lowest average benefits in the country. The minimum disaster unemployment benefit available to workers in those States right now under

the Federal regulations is \$97 in Louisiana, \$85 in Mississippi, and \$90 in Alabama. So you can appreciate that that is not a lot of money for folks to live on in this situation.

And now, you also have on top of that the situation where these families are relocating all over the country. We just got a call yesterday from service providers in Pennsylvania who are receiving 9,000 families, and \$90 in unemployment benefits is not a whole lot to live off of in Pennsylvania, and so it is very important to beef up the minimum benefit.

Third, it is necessary to increase the numbers of weeks of benefits. Right now, the maximum you can collect is 26 weeks, which is all that is available right now to regular unemployment insurance recipients. Back in 1988, before they changed the law, disaster unemployment assistance provided up to 52 weeks of benefits. Obviously, most folks are not going to have to use all that, but many will.

Finally, it is necessary to clarify the rules that allow those who lost their jobs due to the disaster to collect unemployment benefits even if they are not in the disaster area, in the specific disaster counties, for example. Right now, that is permitted under law, that if you lost your job because of, or for reasons related to the disaster—they have to be intimately related to the disaster—even if you are not in the disaster area, you can collect disaster unemployment benefits.

But there is an additional rule that was adopted after September 11 that requires workers to show that their employer lost at least 50 percent of the business from a disaster—from revenue generated in the area of the disaster, another business or contract, something of that sort.

So we have a situation now where you have a lot of surrounding counties, a lot of surrounding States that are really feeling the effects of the disaster, and rather than being able to put workers on disaster unemployment assistance, their State unemployment assistance programs are going to have to absorb those costs.

So just to wrap up, we believe these reforms to the disaster unemployment assistance program are good for workers and their families because it gives them the relief that they need to get by in amounts that exceed regular State benefits right now in the individual States. I believe it is good for employers because it removes the significant pressure on the unemployment system in their States to raise taxes or reduce benefits, and we hope it is also good for the Nation, because it puts in place a more effective Federal disaster program when the next event hits. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Now, we will move to the two organizations that are on the ground first and provide a lot of the original care. We will begin with Major Marilyn White of the Salvation Army.

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR MARILYN WHITE, NATIONAL
CONSULTANT ON ADULT MINISTRIES, SALVATION ARMY**

Major WHITE. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity, members of the committee, as well as, I would say, partners all in this overwhelming job of bringing healing and help to people who are suffering.

Following landfall, the Salvation Army Disaster Services responded to the immediate needs of 500,000 Hurricane Katrina survivors by providing food, water, and shelter in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, not only for the hurricane survivors, but for the first responders.

Within days, the Salvation Army opened up its own facilities and camps to address the high demand for sheltering, and we will continue to provide emergency feeding and shelter as long as it is needed and until recovery plans are initiated. We will also provide financial assistance to supplement funding from both the Red Cross and FEMA.

The Salvation Army has implemented a card system that provides funds for medication for individuals and for additional funds that enable the people themselves to personally be involved in making purchases that they feel they need.

Regarding our disaster recovery, while our disaster services are focused on emergency response, our social services are now evaluating the appropriate role for us to play in a national recovery effort. The strength of the Salvation Army for the past 100 years has been and remains social services.

In addition to our role as an emergency responder, we see the Salvation Army assisting with the development of intermediate housing over the next 2-year period, and we are very concerned that there not be a time limit set for any of this.

Our concern is that displaced Americans are provided in safe and private environments, away from the public eye and segregated by population. Families living with families, the homeless, in an environment that addresses their needs. The elderly with access to medical care. Comprehensive services provided to all.

The question that you posed to us was, what are your needs and how can we respond to them? The Salvation Army believes that not only our organization, but other organizations who are familiar with working with the special needs population must be at the table for designing and crafting the system regarding housing. Special consideration needs to be taken as to where people are placed, and it is these organizations that are most familiar in dealing with this population.

We would also ask that there always be clear communication open between faith-based organizations, who have intensive experience in working with this population, as well as with FEMA.

And as we move into the disaster recovery phase, we would want to again answer the question, who is my neighbor? Not only those individuals who have survived this terrible devastation are our neighbor, but the providers are our neighbors. And as we think of what has been referred to as compassion fatigue, we would like to pledge that we will uphold your hands and ask that you uphold our hands as we minister to these people. Thank you so much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Jan Lane, the Red Cross?

STATEMENT OF JAN LANE, VICE-PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, AMERICAN RED CROSS

Ms. LANE. Thank you, Chairman Enzi. We truly appreciate the opportunity to be here today and your forbearance as the Black-

berries have been going off because we have been responding as we sit.

As of this morning, the American Red Cross has housed over 159,000 survivors in 650 shelters in 17 States. It is the largest and most challenging disaster in our 125-year history.

We have 32,000 trained Red Cross disaster relief workers, the vast majority of them volunteers, from all 50 States responding to this. The full assets of our organization are dedicated to this challenge.

I want to echo what Major White had to say. This work could not be done without the partners in this room, partners that would surprise people. You will hear in a minute that Walgreen's has just been unbelievable in their support.

We have never had to deliver so much aid so quickly in such challenging circumstances, because as with many of you, your organizations, our chapters were inundated. We have worked with city officials on evacuation plans for years and knew that our chapter had to be relocated outside of the confines of New Orleans in order to be able to provide assistance. When we were there last Thursday, we were with our chapter executive, who is doing heroic work, not knowing the status of her house and knowing that at least 95 of her staff, employees, and volunteers are homeless, but continue to deliver Red Cross services daily, and it is a 24/7 operation for the full organization.

In this instance, many of you are familiar that we do have a chapter welfare inquiry system where, no matter when disaster strikes, you can, as a loved one anywhere else in the country, you can go into your local Red Cross chapter or call and say, I need to know about the welfare of a loved one in a disaster area and the communications are down, I can't get through, I have tried everything. This time, we have had to set up, and I want to share this number, a 1-877-LOVED-1S family links registry.

The latest figure that I had last evening was 65,000 names were on that registry, and I know you have seen a number of other registries popping up. As of this morning, I think we can very shortly have the capability technologically-wise to link with the other registries that you are seeing online, and we are facilitating some of those linkages as we go forward and trying to get the technology, simply laptops into shelters.

Certainly, as you heard earlier, the Astrodome is one situation, but the shelters that are open in Hancock and Harrison Counties in Mississippi, that is a little bit different story, as it is with some of the 90 shelters in Louisiana, just trying to keep things going.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you give us that 877 number again?

Ms. LANE. Thank you, sir. It is 1-877-L-O-V-E-D, the numeral "one," S.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. LANE. For purposes of the committee and to try to keep it brief, we do food, clothing, and shelter, but one of the key concerns with such a mass movement of people and in such circumstances has been the public health ramifications when people are in congregate shelters, and that is why joining us today is Dr. Tom Kirsch, who has been on the ground doing a first-hand assessment

of the public health needs in our shelters. I would like to turn to Tom.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Kirsch?

STATEMENT OF TOM KIRSCH, M.D., JOHNS HOPKINS, MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS DISASTER SERVICES AND HEALTH CARE TEAM

Dr. KIRSCH. Thank you, Senator. As I am bringing up the end here, I will try to be as brief as possible, but I am speaking as someone who has spent a considerable amount of time on the ground, both doing direct assessments of shelter and public health issues as well as coordinating with national and local and State officials, and I think my comments will focus on those areas.

The need to coordinate in the health care aspect, I think, was well pointed out by the kind of disconnect that occurred in the health agencies. I think that the State emergency operating committees did a tremendous job. I think that HHS has to take a bit stronger role in working to develop kind of a medical emergency coordinating center and a hierarchy where people can get together. The Red Cross has now actively dispersed physicians to each of the State EOCs to help begin that process and has been, I think, instrumental in bringing those groups together.

We are now working today, starting with the Louisiana State Department of Public Health, as well as the U.S. Public Health Service, to begin a shelter-by-shelter assessment in every one of the shelters in Louisiana and we are hoping to move that process rapidly over to Texas as well as to Mississippi and have representatives on the ground for that.

So I recommend that HHS pay some focus on that coordinating effort and creating a second body.

The other thing, I am very heartened to see the fact that the pharmacy representatives are here because one of the most tremendous issues that we saw time and again in the first few days following the disaster is the inability of people to access their medication. This undoubtedly led to deaths. It has undoubtedly caused difficult problems with psychiatric patients and other very vulnerable populations.

And having some type of effort where we can better coordinate that—the response from the pharmacy down to individual pharmacists who literally emptied their drug stores to people has been tremendous, but there really needs to be a higher-level coordination to help that occur on a smoother basis. It was really ad hoc, and at Red Cross, nurses were literally going to the local Walgreen's and saying, look, I have got all these guys with high blood pressure and diabetes, what can you give me, and the Walgreen's guys were bringing it right over.

So having a more formal process there would make a big difference. That is a big issue in the early days following a disaster. I think it is being very well addressed now. The State of Louisiana has actually created mobile pharmacy units which are out visiting shelters and delivering medications.

The other thing that I think is very important in regard to coordinating, whether that is done through the States or whether that is done through the Medical Reserve Corps or other functions

under HHS would be the coordination of local volunteers. There are admittedly thousands of doctors around the country who are now ready to pour into the States, and yet what I found, arriving just a few days after the disaster, was that the local physicians, the local universities, the local emergency departments had set up mobile teams, had placed themselves in individual shelters, and, in fact, in the larger shelters, full-blown clinics were working with medical records, with pharmacy distribution centers, with some lab capabilities. All of that was done on an ad hoc basis. All of that was without any hierarchical support and simply relied on the good will of the people.

I think there needs to be some better coordinating effort. Red Cross is not in the business of providing actual medical care in their shelters, but in this situation, we opened our doors and allowed individual physicians, nurses, etc., to do that. There needs to be better effort in coordinating that.

The other issue that comes up time and again and will be an ongoing issue is the public health problems. The State public health departments were overwhelmed by this disaster and had so many functions that they had a difficult time responding to all of them simultaneously. I think clear efforts have to be made, both not only for natural disasters, but any given terrorist or manmade disaster that you can see, to further strengthen the State public health departments. There is an urgent need to upgrade their services so that they can better provide the immunizations, the surveillance of diseases, the outbreak investigations, and all of the functions that are so important.

We in the Red Cross during the interim, when that service was not available, made an active attempt to begin those processes ourselves in our shelters. It is not our role. Luckily, in the last year, the Red Cross has committed to work on a public health function. Actually, we have come quite a ways, and I think this disaster gave us an example to try some of the things out we have been talking about.

And I think we need to turn back to the vulnerable populations I think people have talked about here. You know, these horror stories that have come out of Louisiana of abandoned elderly found dead. Well, when I was in the field, I found that not only were the elderly not abandoned, but the nursing homes brought the people out. The staff of the nursing homes stayed with them in the shelters. They brought their own cooks. They brought their own food. They brought their own oxygen. It was a remarkable sight.

But those vulnerable populations truly have to be better integrated into the system. Whether that is providing transportation for the poor or whether that is coordinating all the nursing homes better into the system, I think that is extremely important, that maybe from a local level, but could come also from Federal funding.

I think those are my major comments. I hope they are very concrete. All I have to say is that the response that took place at all levels, not just at the Red Cross, is stunning, and despite the horror stories you have heard on the news, it is a wonderful thing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I appreciate the comments of everybody that was here today. I have taken literally dozens of suggestions down here of things that we need to do, and that is just talk-

ing about this one committee, but we do have a lot of jurisdiction. You have outlined a lot of work for us to do and I really appreciate it.

Part of our problem is getting a little bit of education before we make our decisions, and I have found that a little bit of education goes a long way. You have certainly all been a help to us today.

As we can tell from the discussion today, the devastation is beyond anything anybody has seen in their lifetime. I hope that remains to be the biggest event in our lifetime, as well. But there are things that we need to do to get the relief in place and to rebuild the families and get the communities back.

I just can't express enough on behalf of the committee how much we appreciate all of the individual effort that has been put into this, all of the community effort. There is a spirit of helping in the United States, and something like this brings out the best of that. I hope we can emphasize that a little bit as we get busy on solving the problems that you have.

We appreciate not only the people that have been impacted, but the people that are accepting folks, hopefully on a short-term basis so that they can get back to where they were before and we can get all the people working in this country again. That is a real hub of the United States for the economy, but the economy is the people.

Again, I thank you all for your comments. I will remind everybody that you may have had some reactions to some of the things that were said here. As a result of some of the things that were said, you may come up with some additional ideas. I hope you will put those on our Web site for us so we can begin reviewing those on Monday and get the legislation through as fast as possible for suggestions that were made.

Thank you very much. The roundtable is adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT SENATOR DOLE

Mr. Chairman, my heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to our fellow citizens along the Gulf Coast who have forever had their lives changed by Hurricane Katrina. The devastation wrought by this terrible storm has left hundreds of thousands of Americans in need of relief and compassion. I thank the committee for convening this roundtable discussion so that we can assess how best to help those in need in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

As a former president of the American Red Cross, I am keenly aware of the importance of having a reliable system of communication in place following a disaster so that vital information can reach those in need, as well as those seeking to help. As families begin to rebuild their lives they will face important questions from how to receive medications and collect Social Security checks, to where to send children to school and find housing. At the same time, as we have seen already, families, businesses, churches, and other organizations from across the country are asking how best to help those in need. In order for disaster victims to receive the care they require, Americans across the country should have easy access to organized, up-to-date information regarding the best place to find relief and answers.

In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission assigned 2-1-1 for exactly this purpose. 2-1-1 was created to serve as a referral service for community, volunteer, and health and human services information. Today, 138 million Americans, approximately 47 percent of the U.S. population, can access 2-1-1 with call centers operational in 32 States, including my own State of North Carolina.

Currently, the United Way is leading the effort to secure 2-1-1 as a resource for families and individuals in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, as well as the many other States—including North Carolina—that are now providing shelter to evacuees from the Gulf region. In Louisiana, 2-1-1 has emerged as a critical tool in the recovery effort—in fact, the State Government has actively promoted 2-1-1 as the number to call to receive help, offer assistance, or ask questions related to the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

In my home State of North Carolina the 2-1-1 call centers have seen a dramatic increase in call volume over the past week. In Charlotte, more than 600 individuals have volunteered to house evacuees through 2-1-1 calls, while 1,249 calls in one day alone provided assistance with everything from housing and money to volunteers.

As evacuees come to North Carolina, 2-1-1 is providing them with information about medical care, employment, education for their children, and other local resources. Additionally, 2-1-1 is tracking local resources that can be mobilized to assist in the ongoing relief effort on the Gulf Coast.

2-1-1 is once again demonstrating itself as a valuable service with tremendous benefits for victims in the days following a disaster. Unfortunately, many communities have been unable to implement a 2-1-1 system in their area due to a lack of sustainable funding. In other States, like North Carolina, 2-1-1 is not available statewide because of the same funding issues.

That is why I believe it is so important that this committee act quickly to approve the Calling for 2-1-1 Act, S. 211. This legislation authorizes Federal funding that would help sustain 2-1-1 efforts by augmenting, not replacing, the funding currently received from diverse sources including non-profits, State Governments, foundations, and businesses. This legislation is a common-sense measure that has drawn significant bipartisan support. In fact, a cost-benefit study by the University of Texas found that if 2-1-1 were available to every American across the country, the service would save citizens \$1.1 billion over 10 years.

Mr. Chairman, as we help those affected by Hurricane Katrina recover from this awful tragedy, we must make certain that both victims and volunteers receive accurate and timely information regarding the relief effort. Through the use of the 2-1-1 system we are efficiently and effectively communicating how to receive essential services and provide care for others. In order for 2-1-1 to reach its full potential it is important to provide additional funding through the Calling for 2-1-1 Act.

[Whereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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