

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2005

LIEBERMAN STATEMENT ON HSGAC KATRINA INVESTIGATION

“Hurricane Katrina was an enormously powerful act of nature. It was certainly not caused by any government. But governmental failures in preparing for, and responding to, Hurricane Katrina allowed much more human suffering and property destruction to occur than should have. “And so this Committee has been asked by the Senate leadership to answer the same questions that we all asked after September 11, 2001: “How could this have happened in America, and what must our government do to make sure to the best of our ability that nothing like the national nightmare that Katrina caused ever happens again?”

“Senator Collins and I know how important it is to our country and to our people that we conduct this investigation without partisanship, or defensiveness, and with an overriding and unflinching commitment to find the truth and tell it so our government will never repeat the mistakes it made last week. This is particularly important to our Committee, which originated the legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security and has responsibility under the Senate rules to monitor its work as well as the work of FEMA and other federal agencies involved in preparing for and responding to Hurricane Katrina. “Hurricane Katrina was the most significant test of our new national emergency preparedness and response system since 9-11 and, it obviously did not pass the test. “We need to know why not just to fix what went wrong but to rebuild confidence among the American people – all the American people – in our government’s ability to protect them from attack – whether it comes from nature or terrorists. Last week I watched the events unfold with concern, grief, anger, and embarrassment. We have always known that we were vulnerable to natural disasters, but we also always had confidence that we were strong enough and competent enough to deal with them. That confidence was shaken, and for many broken, last week. Our Committee now has an opportunity and responsibility to help restore it. “This morning, things seem better in New

Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast, although we all know there are difficult days ahead. Government didn't respond to this hurricane as quickly and effectively as we expected and needed, but thousands of individual government workers responded tirelessly and heroically, and that is a good part of why many lives were saved and conditions on the Gulf Coast are better there this morning. "And around our country, millions of Americans are pulling together and reaching out to help the victims of Katrina, as we here in Washington must now come together to help the victims, to fix our emergency response system, and to restore the public's confidence in our government."