

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006

LOUISIANA & MISSISSIPPI GOVERNORS TESTIFY IN HURRICANE KATRINA HEARING

Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Member Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) today held a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to examine the roles, responsibilities, and actions of the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi leading up to and following Hurricane Katrina. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour testified at today's hearing. The hearing was the 15th in a series of hearings that are part of the Committee's investigation of the government's preparation for and response to the hurricane and the aftermath that devastated those states.

"In the partnership among state, local, and federal governments that forms the backbone of the American system of disaster preparation and response, our nation's governors play the central role. They are the essential bridge between local knowledge and needs, and federal expertise and resources," said Senator Collins. "The Governor's influence cannot be overestimated in times of catastrophe. By word and deed, by where the Governor spends time, by the priorities the Governor sets, by the issues and problems the Governor becomes personally involved in, the whole tone and tempo of the response to a disaster are established. We must understand both their obligations and limitations so that the partnership among governments that forms the core of our national emergency response system will be stronger the next time disaster strikes." "At this juncture, the Committee work raises important questions about the failures of government at all levels," said Senator Lieberman. "I applaud the governors of

Mississippi and Louisiana for their extensive cooperation with this Committee's investigation. It is worth noting that the cooperation from these state chief executives and their staffs have provided stands in marked contrast to the recalcitrance of the White House." Governors Blanco and Barbour today both agreed that the greatest obstacle at the state level to successfully responding to the hurricane was the lack of an interoperable communications system that was able to withstand the effects of the storm and its aftermath.