

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2006

# **SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HOLDS FIELD HEARING IN MISSISSIPPI, TOURS NEW ORLEANS AND MEETS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, led by Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Member Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), today held a hearing in Gulfport, Mississippi as part of the committee's investigation into the government's preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. The hearing marked the tenth

as part of the Special Investigation on Hurricane Katrina. In addition, committee members traveled to New Orleans to tour the city and meet with local officials to discuss challenges associated with reconstruction and redevelopment.

“In the months since hurricanes smashed into the Gulf Coast, the federal government has set aside nearly \$70 billion for emergency relief and long-term recovery programs. That’s not enough. The devastation is so widespread that a sustained federal commitment is going to be necessary,” said Senator Collins who previously toured the devastated Gulf Coast two weeks after Hurricane Katrina. Senator Collins also told the people of the region that their losses are “far too great to ignore, and your recovery is essential to the nation.” “We need to try to get every member of Congress to the Gulf Coast and New Orleans for a day to see the destruction,” said Senator Lieberman. “Recovery is going to take years. We can’t kid ourselves, nor can we look the other way. This is a long-term commitment that requires a long-term, coordinated partnership among local, state, federal government and the private sector.” Today’s hearing in Mississippi was held at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gulfport and was titled; “Hurricane Katrina: Mississippi’s Recovery.” Witnesses included, The Honorable Donald E. Powell, Coordinator of Recovery and Rebuilding in the Gulf Coast Region, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; The Honorable Brent Warr, Mayor Gulfport, Mississippi; The Honorable Edward Favre, Mayor Bay St. Louis, Mississippi; Dr. Gavin Smith Director, Governor’s Office of Recovery and Renewal State of Mississippi; the Honorable Gene Taylor, US Representative, Mississippi’s 4th Congressional District. Witnesses testified that FEMA employees on the ground following the hurricane did not have the necessary authority to make critical decisions in a timely manner, and that some federal regulations are burdensome, that the area will require long-term federal assistance for economic recovery. Powell told the committee his two top priorities for the area are debris removal and temporary housing for evacuees. Witnesses also testified that the residents of Mississippi are determined to rebuild. The committee members, which included Senators Susan Collins, Joseph Lieberman, Tom Coburn (R-OK), Mark Pryor (D-AK), Norm Coleman (R-MN), and Mark Dayton (D-MN) also traveled to New Orleans to tour the city and meet with local officials. They were joined by Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA), David Vitter ((R-LA) and former Louisiana Senator John Breaux. In New Orleans they toured the Dillard University Campus; the Central Fire Station, which is the only fire station open in St. Bernard’s Parish; viewed a FEMA travel trailer site, and held a roundtable discussion with Mayor Ray Nagin and other local officials at the Lake Vista Community Center.

