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CHAIRMAN COLLINS RELEASES STATEMENT ON FEMA'S POST DISASTER POLICY CHANGES

WASHINGTON, DC—The Department of Homeland Security has announced a number of changes in Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) recovery strategy, or the manner in which the agency responds and assists victims following a disaster. The announced changes follow numerous reports, many of which were uncovered by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's Hurricane Katrina investigation, into widespread waste, fraud and abuse after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Senator Susan Collins, who chairs the Committee and led the Katrina investigation, has released this statement:

“Throughout the course of our Committee's investigation into Hurricane Katrina, we became aware of more than a billion dollars that was squandered through blatant waste, fraud, and abuse. This waste was so disturbing because the needs of the Gulf Coast region and the victims of last year's Hurricane are so great.

“It is a balancing act to ensure that victims of a disaster receive critical assistance quickly, while working to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not wasted. These changes announced by the Department of Homeland Security appear to be a positive step in the right direction. FEMA’s proposals to verify the identification of claimants before they are provided cash other types of assistance and making payments for temporary housing directly to landlords, could go a long way in preventing waste, fraud, and abuse.

“It is my hope that FEMA will be prepared to implement changes such as these before the next disaster strikes.

“It is a false choice that FEMA must decide between quickly providing assistance to individuals and families in need and spending taxpayer dollars wisely.”

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