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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2005

SENATOR COLLINS COMMENTS ON ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL HURRICANE RESPONSE COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, DC– Senator Susan Collins, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has released the following statement on the announcement by House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist that they will be creating a bipartisan, bicameral, special committee to investigate Hurricane Katrina readiness and response issues:

“Hurricane Katrina has resulted in the worst natural disaster in our nation’s history, inflicting pain and suffering upon hundreds of thousands of individuals and families in the Gulf Coast. My prayers continue to be with the victims of this terrible storm while the recovery efforts continue.

“An issue of this magnitude warrants an in-depth, joint inquiry by both the House and Senate. This joint committee is an appropriate vehicle to address the very important issues and questions surrounding readiness and response efforts

associated with the hurricane.

“While I have not yet seen all of the details of the composition, mandate, and authority of this joint committee, I am honored that Senator Frist has asked me to be the Senate Leader of this investigation, and I stand ready to continue with our oversight efforts, which are already underway.”

Senators Collins and Lieberman will be holding the first public hearing in the Senate on this matter next Wednesday. The hearing will provide the foundation for work to be completed by the joint committee. In addition, the Senators have announced that they will hold a Members-only briefing by high-level FEMA and Coast Guard officials tomorrow.