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SENATORS SUSAN COLLINS AND JOSEPH LIEBERMAN UNVEIL BILL TO ASSIGN AN IG TO OVERSEE KATRINA-RELATED EXPENDITURES

WASHINGTON, DC—During a press conference on Capitol Hill earlier today, Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Susan Collins and Ranking Member Joseph Lieberman, unveiled details of a bill they are introducing to help ensure that the billions of taxpayer dollars appropriated for recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina are spent effectively and free from waste, fraud, and abuse. Their legislation would direct the Special Inspector General for Relief and Reconstruction (SIGR) to oversee and audit federal Katrina-related expenditures which, to date, already exceed \$60 billion. Co-sponsors for the legislation will include Senators John Sununu (R-NH), Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Mark Pryor (D-AR)

During the press conference today to discuss details of the legislation the Senators expressed the importance of immediately putting into place a mechanism to oversee the billions of dollars that will be directed to Hurricane Katrina recovery and relief efforts. They said that there is a responsibility to American taxpayers to ensure that these dollars are spent wisely.

“The scope of the Hurricane Katrina relief and recovery effort is extraordinary. And it will continue to grow. It stands to reason that the safeguards Congress puts in place to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse must also be extraordinary to protect taxpayers’ investment,” said Senator Collins.

Senator Lieberman added, “Our legislation would put a cop on the beat to find waste, fraud, and corruption of the public money appropriated for relief in response to Hurricane Katrina. It would also let everyone know that this cop is on the beat now, not six months, or a year, or two years from now. This is the best way to make sure that the money gets to where we want it to go.”

Specifically, the Senators’ proposal would expand the authority of the Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction without diverting any resources from oversight of expenditures in Iraq. The Senator explained that by utilizing the current IG, there are already systems in place to oversee Katrina-related expenditures within 10 days of enactment.

The IG’s oversight would include:

- A 24-hour fraud, waste, and abuse hotline and widely publicize it in the Gulf Region.
- Quickly hire, coordinate, and deploy auditors and investigators to the Gulf Region.
- A strategic oversight plan that includes audits of no bid contractors
- Coordination with oversight in the agencies and states involved in reconstruction.
- Reporting regularly to Congress on the status of Hurricane Katrina activities.