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# **SENATORS COLLINS AND LIEBERMAN HOLD KATRINA HEARING TO DISCUSS IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF VICTIMS AND COMMUNITIES**

WASHINGTON, DC– Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Susan Collins and Ranking Member Joseph Lieberman today held a hearing titled, “Recovering from Hurricane Katrina: Responding to the Immediate Needs of its Victims.” Today’s hearing was the second held by Senators Collins and Lieberman in conjunction with their committee’s investigation into preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina.

Witnesses at today’s hearing included, The Honorable Robert A. Eckels, County Judge in Harris County, Texas; The Honorable Melvin L. Holden, Mayor-President of Baton Rouge, LA; The Honorable Robert V. Massengill, Mayor of Brookhaven, Mississippi; and The Honorable Dan Coody, Mayor of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

“This Committee is undertaking an in-depth investigation into the inadequate preparedness and response to the hurricane, but our immediate focus is on ensuring that bureaucratic roadblocks, inflexible policies, outdated laws, and wasteful practices do not impede the prompt and compassionate delivery of needed assistance,” said Senator Collins. She added, “Today’s witnesses brought to our attention that there appears to have been a serious lack of communication among FEMA officials in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and that there is a misunderstanding in many communities about what FEMA’s responsibilities are. These are important matters that we will look at more closely throughout the course of our investigation.”

The Senators announced that the Committee intends to hear testimony from Acting FEMA Director David Paulison next week. In addition the Senators will soon send the first document requests to federal and state entities-they are extensive. They are also working closely with the GAO and the Inspectors General.