

MONDAY, JULY 20, 2009

# LIEBERMAN, LANDRIEU RELEASE NEW GAO FINDINGS ON KATRINA, RITA RECOVERY EFFORTS

WASHINGTON—Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn., and Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery Chairman Mary Landrieu, D-La., Monday released a series of four Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports detailing problems with Post-Katrina recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast region. The reports, co-requested by Lieberman and Landrieu, lay out problems across a wide swath of areas, ranging from slow distribution of federal funds, to barriers receiving adequate health care, to poorly coordinated case management programs.

“Four years after Hurricane Katrina struck, many of its survivors continue to struggle, which means that we must continue to fight for more effective programs to help those in need,” Lieberman said. “These reports will help us understand what has, and what hasn’t worked, and all of us—Congress, FEMA, the Administration—must learn our lessons so that Americans who are struck by disaster receive the support they need to rebuild their lives, and taxpayers receive their money’s worth for their generous support of their fellow Americans who are struck by disaster.”

“Program flaws and recovery delays since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita provide valuable lessons as we prepare for future disaster,” Landrieu said. “From strengthening case management, to untangling housing funds from bureaucratic red tape, to increasing access to mental health and other primary health care services, these GAO reports shed light on several concrete steps our government must take to improve response and recovery. These reports make it clear that without fundamental reform, progress along the Gulf Coast could be further delayed. I look forward to working with Chairman Lieberman and other committee members to address these findings and to make FEMA, HUD, HHS and our other federal partners stronger, smarter agencies going forward.”

Lieberman and Landrieu requested the reports as part of their oversight efforts on Gulf Coast recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Ranking Member Susan Collins, R-Me., was also a co-requestor on the report, "Community Development Block Grant Program Guidance to States Needs to be Improved."

The other three reports are part of a series of seven that GAO is issuing on Hurricane Katrina-related issues.

The reports are:

- Disaster Coordination and an Evaluation of Programs Outcomes Could Improve Disaster Case Management (GAO-09-561)
- Community Development Block Grant Program Guidance to States Needs to be Improved (GAO-09-541)
- Barriers to Mental Health Services for Children Persist in Greater New Orleans, Although Federal Grants Are Helping to Address Them (GAO-09-563)
- Federal Grants Have Helped Health Care Organizations Provide Primary Care, but Challenges Remain (GAO-09-588)