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THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Fact Sheet: President Bush Announces New Initiatives to Provide Relief

Today's Presidential Action:

Today, President Bush Announced Two New Initiatives Providing Immediate Assistance To Hurricane Katrina Evacuees. The President has directed the Federal government to provide immediate financial assistance and streamline Federal benefits for evacuees. These steps will ensure that help is delivered into the hands of those who need it as quickly and easily as possible.

Immediate Financial Assistance:

- **The Federal Government Will Provide Evacuees \$2,000 In Needed Financial Assistance.** The Federal government is working to provide \$2,000 in immediate emergency disaster relief to every household affected by Hurricane Katrina. To expedite the process, the President has directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to work with the Red Cross and large shelters like the Houston Astrodome to get the funds into citizens' hands as soon as possible. Those victims who are currently staying with families, friends, in hotels, or at smaller shelters provided by churches, synagogues, and other community organizations, can register for help benefits by calling 1-800-621-FEMA or if they have internet access, by visiting www.fema.gov. This immediate financial assistance will be available to help evacuees with transportation, clothing, housing, and food costs and is just the first step on the road to full recovery.
- **The Federal Government Is Working To Expedite The Aid Process.** FEMA is reaching out to evacuees and assisting them in applying for Federal aid. More than 400,000 evacuees have already been registered. Registration is the first step in receiving assistance and the process is being expedited to quickly and efficiently provide help to those in need. FEMA workers are working in shelters and recovery centers to ensure that those displaced by Hurricane Katrina receive the food, shelter, clothing, and financial assistance they need. And FEMA has 3,000 people working around the clock taking calls at 1-800-621-FEMA to help victims get the assistance they need.

Working To Ensure Continuity Of Benefits

- **The Federal Government Will Streamline Benefits To Evacuees.** While the Nation is focused on providing evacuees with immediate needs such as food, water, and shelter, many need to begin the process of rebuilding their lives. Many victims need access to the benefits they received before Hurricane Katrina struck - programs like Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Head Start, and Food Stamps. Recognizing that most evacuees have lost records and legal documents, the Federal government will grant special "evacuee" status to streamline and simplify the enrollment process, and provide financial assistance to states for the cost of care. This will make it easier for evacuees to register and collect benefits in whatever state they now reside.

- **Evacuees Will Have Access To The Full Range Of Services.** States housing evacuees already have in place the systems and expertise to enroll displaced people into benefit programs. State enrollment teams are currently operating in shelters and many have 1-800 information numbers. Any evacuee can go to the nearest state or local benefits office to get information and enroll. For those with access to the internet, they can get information at www.govbenefits.gov. Evacuees can apply for the full range of Federal benefits administered by the states - such as Medicaid, child care, mental health services, Food Stamps, housing, and job training. By streamlining the process, the Federal government is ensuring that evacuees can receive needed Federal benefits.
- **Federal Help To States.** To help states with the costs of providing immediate care and immediate benefits for their fellow Americans, the President is working with Congress to reimburse the states that are taking in evacuees from the affected areas along the Gulf Coast. The Federal government is committed to helping the states provide the services that evacuees need, including education, health care, mental health, child welfare, child care, and family reunification.

Next Friday Is A National Day Of Prayer

- **The President Has Declared Friday, September 16, 2005, A National Day Of Prayer And Remembrance.** Throughout our history, Americans have come together in prayer to heal and seek strength. To honor the victims and survivors of this devastating hurricane, the President has declared Friday, September 16, 2005, as a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance.

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