



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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**Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus
U.S. Senate Finance Committee Hearing: "Hurricane Katrina: Community Rebuilding
Needs and Effectiveness of Past Proposals."**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this initial hearing to discuss our response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. This hearing will explore our options for what will surely be years of rebuilding in that region.

I traveled down to the Gulf Coast region earlier this month. I saw first-hand the destruction left in the path of Katrina. It is truly stunning.

The victims of Katrina have many needs, some of which we addressed in the tax legislation that passed last week. That bill addressed some of the immediate needs of Katrina victims: cash, jobs, housing, and help for the charities who are helping out on the ground.

I was pleased that Congress could come together, Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, to work with the President last week in enacting that emergency tax relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

And we must go further. The Senate must pass the Katrina health package that you and I put together.

We need to enact that legislation to help people like Tina Eagerton, who fled Louisiana when 7 months pregnant, but could not find a Florida doctor who would accept her Louisiana Medicaid card. We need to enact that legislation to help Rosalind Breaux, who has colon cancer, and was scheduled for her third round of chemotherapy on August 31, a day after flooding began, while her husband has lost his job and there are questions about his insurance.

We need to ensure that people like Rosalind Breaux and Tina Eagerton have health care coverage. That is the least that we can do.

And now our job turns to the difficult task of rebuilding a region, and rebuilding millions of lives.

This means not only roads, bridges, schools, and libraries. It also means rebuilding lives, businesses, history, and culture. We can easily rebuild a *house*. It is much harder to rebuild a *home*.

We can easily give help with a job. We did that in our first bill. But how do we give people back their lives and their dignity?

And for the children who lived for days in sports stadiums, and weeks in shelters, how do we give them back security? How do we give them back their smiles?

This next bill is not just about business expensing or bond authority. It is about helping people to reestablish their lives.

So, Mr. Chairman, our next bill will take more time. As we will hear today from our Governors, we may not be able to truly assess the needs in the Gulf Coast region for some time, as Hurricane Rita has prevented many from re-entering the disaster zone.

We are so fortunate today to have the Governors of the affected states with us to share their personal experiences. We will also hear from experts about their experiences from prior disasters, which will guide us in crafting this important legislation.

And after this series of hearings, we must pass legislation. We must pass legislation that makes a difference in the lives of the people affected. That is what we came here to do.

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