



SEP 21 2005

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in response to your letter dated September 14, 2005, concerning the deaths of nursing home and hospital patients in the Gulf Coast States in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Like you, this office is tremendously concerned about the possible abuse and neglect of hospital patients and nursing home residents.

Therefore, I assure you that this office is taking very seriously all allegations we receive concerning these issues. After reviewing each allegation, we will investigate any matter under our jurisdiction or refer any matter outside of our authority to the proper agency. This office will also assist agencies that have primary jurisdiction on any investigation where such assistance is legal and appropriate. For example, in the specific matter of the 34 deaths in St. Rita's Nursing Home, please be aware that we are assisting the Louisiana Attorney General's Office under the theory that false claims were submitted to the Medicaid program for care that was not given. This office concurs with your opinion that all appropriate legal remedies should be pursued against any individuals or entities that willfully failed in their duties to protect and care for their patients.

As always, this office welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this and all other issues of mutual interest. If you have any questions on this matter, please contact me or have your staff call Judy Holtz, Acting Director of External Affairs, at (202) 619-0260.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel R. Levinson".

Daniel R. Levinson
Inspector General

cc:

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales