

Senator Joe Lieberman
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee
Recovering from Hurricane Katrina: The Next Phase
As Prepared for Delivery
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Thank you Madame Chairman for calling this important first hearing where we will begin to look at what we can do to aid the people of New Orleans and the rest of Gulf Coast with their recovery in the aftermath of the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

This is the appropriate first step.

This is a moment when we can step in quite early to ensure we get this rebuilding process right. This is our chance to hear from experts and begin to lay down markers of what kind of steps can help put these communities back on their feet – and also what steps we might want to avoid.

It's also a chance to begin to consider how we make sure we spend the more than \$60 billion already approved by Congress – with billions more likely on the way – wisely.

And again, we'll want to ask our witnesses what investments worked in their communities and what kinds of spending were wasteful.

This first hearing will focus on several questions:

How can we meet the special needs of those displaced?

What lessons can be drawn from the aftermath of previous disasters?

What are the short, mid, and long-term needs of the survivors?

How can we best prepare for this recovery process?

What are likely problems that we may face that we should be aware of so that we can plan for and avoid them?

Hurricane Katrina's devastating path of destruction has caused a loss of life and property beyond any experienced in the United States in our lifetimes.

Whole communities were blown over by howling winds and then plowed under by toxic waters from storm surge, torrential rains and smashed levees.

In the wake of this devastation, hundreds of thousands of our fellow Americans are now homeless, jobless and spread across our nation in temporary housing – with little hope for many of them of ever seeing their old homes whole again.

Many families have been separated and are yet to be reunited.

The personal and human toll from this storm on those directly affected has been immense.

But it has also been a jolt to millions of Americans who watched the horror, night after night on television.

It has pulled away the covers that hid the "other America" – not only those Americans left behind during the evacuation, but those who are also left behind in communities across our country every single day.

Those images were searing. But let them burn in our conscience as we seek to recover from Hurricane Katrina – and ultimately rebuild trust and faith across America.

At the end of this process of response, recovery and rebuilding, let no group have reason to believe they have been left behind by their fellow Americans.

I want to thank our witnesses for taking time to be with us today. Each of you brings a unique personal history to the problems our nation faces now and I look forward to your testimony and your answers to the questions that I know all of us will have.

With your help, we must begin to carefully plan and prepare for the challenges Hurricane Katrina's aftermath has presented us in order to ensure a complete and successful recovery.

The response to Hurricane Katrina has shaken the public's confidence in the ability of government at all levels to protect them in a crisis.

We can begin to restore that confidence by the effectiveness and wisdom of the ongoing work of government to help the people and region that were hit by Katrina to recover and rebuild.

Thank you Madame Chairman.