



**NEWS FROM HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR  
CONGRESSMAN JAMES E. CLYBURN**

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Issue: Hurricane Katrina

# District Dispatch

## Katrina's Impact After Six Months

February 28, 2006 marked six months since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast and decimated the lives of so many that lived there. To recognize this somber milestone, I joined a congressional delegation on a trip to the region. For me, this was the first opportunity to see the impact of Katrina up close.

Like all Americans, I watched the horrifying images of Katrina's wrath on television. I shed tears and was moved to action, leading the charge in my hometown of Columbia, South Carolina to welcome more than 2,000 Gulf Coast residents displaced by the hurricane. I heard their stories and helped them navigate the FEMA maze – sometimes with success, sometimes with frustration.

But the overwhelming feeling of

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being surrounded by destruction and despair is more than I can quantify. The emotions are still as raw and the scenes just as disturbing as the days following Katrina. It is heart wrenching to experience firsthand the helplessness and hopelessness of many in the Gulf Coast. These are our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers,

friends and neighbors who feel abandoned and abused by the system. And who can blame them?

It is hard to look back over the last six months and take pride in the progress we have made. Nearly 750,000 families remain displaced by Katrina, and many are still waiting on temporary trailers or a clear directive from FEMA about how long they will receive rental assistance. Many want to go home, but with nothing to return to and few resources to rebuild, this seems little more than a dream. Even if they did have housing in the New Orleans area, there is little infrastructure to support them. Basic services like water, electricity, telephones and sewers are spotty at best. Only seven of 22 hospitals are

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### By the Numbers

	<b>Lives Lost (as of 2/28/06)</b>	<b>Total Federal Spending to Date</b>	<b>Pending Requests</b>	<b>Federal Dollars Allocated for Rebuilding</b>
<b>War in Iraq &amp; Afghanistan</b>	<b>2,294 dead/ 15,500 seriously injured</b>	<b>\$400 billion</b>	<b>\$70 billion</b>	<b>\$18.4 billion</b>
<b>Hurricane Katrina</b>	<b>1330 dead/ 2,096 missing</b>	<b>\$85 billion</b>	<b>\$18 billion</b>	<b>\$11.5 billion (CDBG Grants)</b>

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open. Only 18 of 117 public schools are operational. The colleges and universities have laid off or furloughed as many as two-thirds of their faculty and staffs. Many parts of the Crescent City appear to be part of a third world country, not an American treasure.

**“America can only be as strong as its weakest link.”**

The story of Katrina is a cautionary one, which those of us in government must heed. This disaster was the first real test after 9/11. The administration did not meet its promise to provide security and protection for the American people in times of crisis whether by man-made or natural causes? The answer is a resounding no. Our resources both fiscal and physical designated to protect the homeland are spread too thin.

We are borrowing record amounts of foreign money to wage wars and assist hurricane survivors. Meanwhile, we are not asking all Americans to share the burden of paying for these actions. The wealthiest one percent of Americans are enjoying lucrative tax breaks, and working Americans are struggling to heat their homes or fuel their cars. Working Americans are struggling to pay for prescription drugs and rising health care costs. Working Americans are

struggling to pay for early childhood education programs or afford skyrocketing college tuition. And yet, if we have learned any lessons from Katrina, it is that most Americans are just one crisis away from financial ruin.

That is why I am original co-sponsor of HR 4197, the Congressional Black Caucus' legislation to provide a better response to Hurricane Katrina survivors. In the blue box, I have highlighted important provisions of this bill. I support this legislation because I believe it is the most comprehensive in providing long-term solutions for those affected by Katrina. However, it goes beyond this current crisis to call for the President to present a 10-year plan to eradicate poverty in America. As a nation, we will never prevent another Katrina until we address the underlying problem of poverty that has been exposed during this disaster.

As we look back on the last six months, there have been false starts and missed opportunities. We cannot let the next six months pass without taking meaningful action to help Hurricane Katrina survivors rebuild their lives, and begin laying the groundwork to ensure we are fully prepared for any future disasters.

America can only be as strong as its weakest link. It is time to strengthen all the links in the chain that binds us together, so we can weather the storms that come our way in the future. Together, America can do better.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF HR 4197

- Authorizes additional funds for home repairs through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Includes funding for 300,000 additional Section 8 Vouchers.
- Funds rebuilding medical facilities and seeks to close racial health disparities and access inequities. Funds Medicaid coverage for survivors in poverty, pays private health insurance premiums for survivors, and prohibits cancellation by insurance providers.
- Authorizes payment for states to provide emergency Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits to survivors, and extends unemployment benefits.
- Helps meet educational needs by funding Child Care Development Act Block Grants and Head Start Services. Provides funding to help schools serving relocated students, to rebuild Katrina-devastated schools, to assist homeless youth, to support community learning centers and to forgive college student loans.
- Provides Katrina evacuees the same absentee ballot and registration provisions available to military personnel and funds the restoration and replacement of election materials and equipment.
- Reinstates wage requirements, sets employee goals in contracting, requires contractors to provide apprenticeship opportunities and reinstates affirmative action. Funds new SBA disaster loans and increases loan caps on SBA loans to small businesses impacted.
- Exempts victims of natural disasters from most provisions of the new bankruptcy law.