

watched as countless charities, individuals from the private and public sector and the faith-based community joined together to welcome their neighbors with unmatched Southern hospitality.

I am very proud of the Arkansas National Guard. Many of these Guard members have spent months in Iraq away from their families this year, but they were eager to join the military operation to help rescue Hurricane victims, secure the streets of New Orleans, and maintain order in many of our shelters. I am also pleased that these Guard members have been mobilized under title 32 so that their time counts for purposes of retirement, health care and other benefits enjoyed by their Active-Duty counterparts.

After the initial devastation of Hurricane Katrina, I called my Gulf Coast colleagues to ask how I could help and support their constituents in their time of need. I am working to honor their requests by coordinating logistics for evacuees and helping evacuees in Arkansas resolve problems involving Social Security checks, postal services, and FEMA forms. My office is also working to find housing for evacuees, transport them, reunite families, and assist with translation. As 60,000 or more of their constituents have traveled to Arkansas, I am working to serve their constituents as well as Arkansans. Evacuees should know that as they get their lives back together, they have a home in Arkansas.

While the American people were stepping up to the plate, the Government struck out. Our emergency plans failed to meet expectations. I want to focus on helping distressed families now, but in the not too distant future, we need to take a hard look at the failures that occurred in responding to this disaster.

Under Senate rules, Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN are tasked with leading Government oversight as the ranking members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. As a member of this committee, I can attest to their strong, bipartisan, and tested leadership. The intelligence restructuring bill drafted in this committee, passed by this body, and signed into law by President Bush last year is a fitting example. This same committee ought to pursue its oversight responsibilities on the Government's slow rescue and response efforts. I believe very adamantly that part of any investigation, and subsequent legislation, must begin with fixing the chain-of-command and bureaucratic breakdowns that occurred before and after the hurricane. If the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee is not tapped for this undertaking, then I believe the families of the Gulf Coast, and the rest of the Nation, deserve a thorough review of the mistakes that occurred by an independent body in a setting where politics will not play a role.

A primary reason for the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, following 9/11, was to allow for a

smooth and immediate rescue and recovery operation when disaster strikes—whether naturally occurring or manmade. But instead of a smooth operation, States and Federal agencies again ran into redtape and confusion. A terrorist attack and a hurricane are, of course, two completely different disasters, but the response efforts are just as critical and necessary, and they translate into saving lives.

We have put enormous resources into a national emergency preparedness and response system nearly 4 years after 9/11, and I am concerned and dismayed that our response to a significant disaster has not been improved exponentially. The Government's failure to respond effectively shows weaknesses in our emergency preparedness not just to Americans but also to terrorists who seek havoc in our country.

We must find and fix the discrepancies in the system, look for accountability, and make sure these mistakes are never repeated in the United States again. We owe this to the victims of Hurricane Katrina and, quite frankly, we owe it to the victims of 9/11.

I believe the problems that occurred before, during and after the hurricane have unveiled something else about America. They have opened up eyes in Washington, DC, and across the country about the abject poverty some families live in. Those left stranded on their rooftops or in the Superdome painted a very vivid picture about the inequities that exist in our country today, and they speak volumes about the transportation, housing and health care available in this country.

If anything at all comes from this tragedy, I hope it will be a new focus on our priorities in this body. Before the hurricane hit, the Senate was expected to return from its August recess to vote on repealing the estate tax for wealthiest 2 percent of Americans, and cutting health care services for our poorest Americans. Hurricane Katrina showed that we, as a Nation, are failing to take care of our poor, our sick, and our elderly. Government must do better, and that leadership must start with the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives.

We can start with a number of proposals that have been put forth by both Republicans and Democrats to help the South recover from Hurricane Katrina. These initiatives range from financial assistance to host States for evacuee care; tax incentives for employers to hire evacuees; and health care, housing, and nutritional assistance for evacuees. I stand ready to help and lead in these efforts.

Senator LANDRIEU delivered an impassioned speech on the floor yesterday, and I end with her words, "We must learn from this experience. If we do not, we will fail again."

REMOVAL OF COSPONSOR TO S. 1014

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise to make a statement explaining the re-

moval of the Senator from Tennessee, Majority Leader BILL FRIST, as a co-sponsor of S. 1014, Supporting Our Patriotic Business Act of 2005. It was an inadvertent error my staff made when adding additional cosponsors to this bill. I apologize to Senator FRIST for any confusion and inconvenience this may have caused and want the record to reflect that it was an error on my part.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, due to the circumstances surrounding the Katrina disaster, I was in my home State of Louisiana yesterday and unable to vote for final passage of H.R. 3673, the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of H.R. 3673.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On August 31, 2005, Jenifer Royer was punched by a man outside a Fayetteville, AR restaurant. The apparent motivation for the attack was over Royer's sexual orientation. Royer suffered both a black eye and a broken nose during the incident, according to police.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that are born out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JERRY WALDOR

• Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, today I wish to offer a tribute to a valued friend, Jerry Waldor of South Orange, NJ. He passed away last week at the age of 77.

Jerry ran his own successful insurance agency New Jersey for more than 45 years. Jerry was justifiably proud of his success in business, but that was only one aspect of his life. He was devoted to his family, his community, and his country.

Jerry and his wife Rita were blessed with three sons and eight grandchildren. He would talk glowingly about his family given the slightest opportunity to do so.