



Committee on Financial Services Hearing  
“Federal Housing Response to Hurricane Katrina”  
February 6, 2007  
Statement for the Record

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Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing today.

Mr. Chairman, the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina still feels fresh in many minds, including mine. After going through eight hurricanes in less than two years, as Florida did, I can sympathize with the tragedy Katrina’s victims have experienced, and my heartfelt prayers still go to those who lost so much.

Tragedies like that of Hurricane Katrina remind us that no matter how sophisticated America gets, we are still at the beck and call of Mother Nature. Just this weekend I toured central Florida, which as you know, was ravished by three unexpected, deadly tornadoes. At least 20 people are dead in Florida because of the tornadoes, and in my district alone over 1200 homes were damaged. One-hundred-sixty-four of those homes were completely destroyed and at least 500 homes are uninhabitable.

What still amazes me in these times of disaster is the swift responsiveness of the Florida government. Other than a few minor implications, in every natural disaster Florida’s state, county and municipal governments, and even local neighborhoods, are prepared, organized, mobilized, and effective. And our residents take it upon themselves to be prepared also – they stock up on necessities before a tragedy strikes, they have escape routes and communication plans in place, and they do not rely on anyone else to take care of them, including their government.

We have uncovered many mistakes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. FEMA lacked controls and oversight to prevent rampant waste and fraud, and many claim that the federal government’s response was slow and inadequate. However, I hope today we also look at the mistakes of the local governments involved in Katrina and what they can do differently to protect themselves should disaster strike again. If we are on a witch-hunt today in this committee hearing, let us not be selective in which witches we persecute.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.