

## Opening Statement of Senator Ted Stevens

### “Beyond Trailers, Part I:

### Creating a More Flexible, Efficient and Cost-Effective Federal Disaster Housing Program”

April 24, 2007

- Hurricane Katrina is the largest natural disaster the United States has ever faced. Given both the extensive and intensive nature of the damage, our ability to provide emergency housing, among other services, was pushed to its limit.
- When a system is put under this kind of stress, one of the most useful things we as a nation can do is to critically examine our response and to determine how we can better address our needs in the future. It is one of the things we do best. I hope we can begin that self-examination process here today by looking at our response to the Katrina created housing needs throughout the Gulf Coast region and by beginning to identify where we need to change our response methodology.
- In particular, I want to hear more about the possible replacements to traditional FEMA trailers that are supposed to be developed through the Alternative Housing Pilot Program. I do not need to tell you that those trailers would not work in Alaska or any number of places in the lower 48 that experience severe winter conditions. Furthermore, we all know that trailers are useless where there are no roads, whether that location is bush Alaska where the nearest road may be hundreds of miles away, or a barrier island on the East Coast cut off by the destructive force of a hurricane. I want to know if these needs are being addressed.
- This Alternative Housing Pilot Program is our first attempt at making our overall disaster housing program more responsive to the actual needs of our fellow Americans and, even though the program has just started, we need to examine whether we are going to get a true alternative to trailers for our \$400 million.
- I look forward to hearing from the Federal officials who administer both the current housing program and the new alternative program, but more importantly we need to hear from the beneficiaries of these programs as to what kind of real benefit they are actually receiving.
- In conclusion, I look forward to learning more about the problems we faced and are still facing after Katrina and how we are changing our response system to ensure that FEMA will better provide for our housing needs both for this disaster and future ones.