



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

<http://finance.senate.gov>

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
Re: GAO report on FEMA, Red Cross coordination
Da: Thursday, June 8, 2006

Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today made the following comment on a new report from the Government Accountability Office, "Hurricanes Katrina and Rita/Coordination between FEMA and the Red Cross Should Be Improved for the 2006 Hurricane Season," GAO-06-712. Grassley has been reviewing the Red Cross' governance and performance as part of a broad review of tax-exempt organizations' service to the public.

"I take the GAO report as giving FEMA and the Red Cross a 'D' for their coordination of relief work on Katrina, and even worse, an 'incomplete' on making necessary changes to prevent a similar foul-up the next time the federal government responds to a national disaster. The report leaves the impression that when the next hurricane hits, leaving people hungry and homeless, FEMA and the Red Cross will be haggling over who's supposed to provide food and shelter.

"The hurricane season is here. The Red Cross and FEMA need to resolve their working relationship and staffing issues now. As my oversight work has shown, and is supported by today's report, FEMA also should be working with other charities as well as the Red Cross to ensure a successful response to national disasters. In addition, I'm pleased that the GAO agrees with the findings of my oversight that there has to be a significant role for professional, knowledgeable Red Cross disaster relief staff. It's placing an unfair burden on temporary workers and volunteers for them to shoulder the lion's share of responsibility for helping Americans in need.

"Americans should expect nothing less from FEMA and the Red Cross than an 'A' on all assignments. I'm meeting with Red Cross leadership in a few weeks and will want a full update on the Red Cross' progress in responding to today's GAO report."