

# THE DEMAND FOR AN INDEPENDENT KATRINA COMMISSION CONTINUES TO GROW



**Democrats are calling for a bipartisan, independent, 9-11 Commission-style investigation into the inept federal response to Hurricane Katrina. The American public overwhelmingly agrees, as do editorial boards from newspapers across the country. It is time for Republicans to heed this national call for an independent commission.**

**“By more than 4-to-1, Americans want an independent panel — not Congress — to investigate the government's response to Katrina.”**

**-USA Today, 9/20/05**

- **USA Today:** “The need for a thorough, impartial investigation might seem obvious. The stakes in an era when any large city might be struck by catastrophic terrorism certainly are. But so far it’s not happening.” [Editorial, 9/23/05]
- **Cleveland Plain Dealer:** “Such judgments — on this and many other apparent failures at all levels of government before, during and after the storm — demand examination by an unimpeachable panel whose only interest is determining the truth. We must have a Katrina commission.” [Editorial, 9/22/05]
- **Dayton Daily News:** “Obviously, Congress should create an independent bipartisan commission to look into the post-catastrophe catastrophe along the Gulf Coast. What went wrong in the evacuation and the aftermath of Katrina is a big subject that should have the full-time attention of the most capable, fair-minded people of both parties.” [Editorial, 9/20/05]
- **Ft. Worth Star-Telegram:** “Both President Bush and Congress are planning to investigate the federal response to the disaster that Hurricane Katrina wrought along the Gulf Coast, especially in New Orleans. Fine. Let them do so. But given the political tone and division in Washington and the country, any such examination inevitably will become partisan... Those issues are best studied by men and women who don’t have an immediate political stake in the outcome. And what’s needed to assure this is an independent commission similar to the one that studied 9-11.” [Editorial, 9/17/05]
- **Sacramento Bee:** “The president pledged to cooperate in the coming congressional investigation. The magnitude of the failures demand more, an independent investigative panel, akin to the 9/11 commission, as free from the taint of partisan bias as possible.” [Editorial, 9/17/05]

- **The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin):** “If the president is serious, he should...support the immediate creation of an independent blue ribbon commission to investigate why the initial response to the crisis was so miserable. The president should recognize that if there are fundamental flaws in the nation’s emergency management systems, they must be corrected now -- before the next disaster hits.” [Editorial, 9/16/05]
- **News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina):** “The search for answers is complicated by finger-pointing on the part of those who would deflect blame or score political points. That’s why it makes sense to create an independent commission, much like the group that took an intensive look at the events of Sept. 11, 2001, to root out the many failures associated with Katrina. The point is not just to publicly pummel the guilty. Rather, it is to save future lives. As Hurricane Ophelia has shown, it is not a question of if another storm will come, but where will it hit and how big it will be.” [Editorial, 9/16/05]
- **The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon):** “Bush said, ‘This government will learn the lessons of Hurricane Katrina.’ But he, and Republican leaders in the Senate, have rejected the sensible idea of an independent commission to investigate the failed response of all levels of government...” [Editorial, 9/16/05]
- **Portland Press Herald (Maine):** “An investigation, however, will eventually be approved - and it should be an independent probe. Given the polarization that has already occurred, only a nonpartisan body can fairly look into any failures in preparedness or execution that may have occurred...there is no merit to arguments from some Republicans that a bipartisan investigation should consist of lawmakers from both the House and Senate, with more GOP members to reflect the party’s congressional weight.” [Editorial, 9/16/05]
- **New York Times:** “It would be wonderful if the president would take the opportunity tonight to endorse an independent inquiry into the Katrina disaster, similar to the 9/11 commission’s work.” [Editorial, 9/15/05]
- **Palm Beach Post (Florida):** “President Bush, who speaks to the nation tonight, could show he’s getting serious by naming an independent commission, not a Republican-dominated whitewash team, to find out what went wrong.” [Editorial, 9/15/05]
- **The Atlanta Journal-Constitution:** “When it counted, the tens of billions of dollars invested by American taxpayers in emergency preparedness since Sept. 11 bought us little or no payoff. In fact, the government response at all levels to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina has simply been scandalous... Only an independent commission of serious, open-minded Americans can tell us what happened and how we can do much better next time. And while the results of such an inquiry should not be prejudged, those balking at an independent investigation look for all the world as if they’re hiding something.” [Editorial, 9/14/05]
- **Boston Globe:** “The president can talk all he wants about recovery and rebuilding tomorrow, but Katrina will cast a shadow on his administration until an independent commission examines what went wrong in this epochal disaster.” [Editorial, 9/14/05]
- **Columbus Dispatch:** “The nation needs an independent, bipartisan commission to take an unflinching, unbiased look at the emergency response to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Americans were well-served by the 9/11 Commission and its report, which laid out fundamental flaws in the nation’s defenses that left it vulnerable to the terror attacks of four years ago. The commission, which distilled months of hearings into a succinct and useful report, came about only after intense pressure from the families of 9/11 victims...”

“The bipartisan, but Republican-conceived House-Senate committee proposed by House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., would be regarded with suspicion no matter how fairly and objectively it carried out its work.... A competent, independent Hurricane Katrina commission would help the nation understand what failed on the Gulf Coast and how to avoid such mistakes the next time.” [Editorial, 9/14/05]

- **Toledo Blade:** “It seems to us that the most appropriate examination of the federal response to Katrina and the flooding would be an independent commission along the lines of the blue-ribbon panel that studied the 9/11 attack, with a mandate to make recommendations. Congress should insist on that approach.” [Editorial, 9/14/05]
- **The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky):** “A better idea would be a high-powered, independent panel, on the order of the 9/11 commission. Members would be drawn from lists provided by both the White House and both parties in Congress, but commissioners should be chosen for their integrity and backgrounds and not their political loyalty... Public confidence in the government has been severely shaken by the scandalous inadequacy of the initial federal response. A relentlessly thorough and honest vetting of the facts could help restore trust.” [Editorial, 9/9/05]
- **Houston Chronicle:** “...the most promising option is...an independent commission along the lines of the Sept. 11 probe. It should be headed by national figures of unassailable independence and credibility, such as former President Jimmy Carter, former Secretary of State Colin Powell and retiring Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. Their mission would be to examine the failings of the Katrina relief effort, in a setting open to the public, and to document the facts...With the nation’s capacity to deal with disasters in question, unraveling the man-made aspects of this one is neither finger-pointing nor playing the blame game. Rather, it is an essential self-examination with the aim of preventing a recurrence of what once were unthinkable scenes of mass human suffering and anarchy in an American city.” [Editorial, 9/9/05]
- **Miami Herald:** “A better approach would be to convene a panel similar to the 9/11 Commission that investigated the terrorism attacks against the United States four years ago. That group was bipartisan and independent. Its exhaustive report meticulously detailed faults in U.S. security and recommended reasonable fixes.” [Editorial, 9/9/05]
- **Chicago Tribune:** “Once the flood survivors are stabilized, Americans will demand that officials at all levels of government sort out what went so horrendously wrong. The president and Congress have vowed to investigate. One logical tool: an independent, bipartisan panel, like the 9/11 Commission, to autopsy these failings and prescribe remedies for the future.” [Editorial, 9/8/05]
- **Denver Post:** “Full-fledged inquiries into governments’ (plural) anemic response to Hurricane Katrina are essential in the wake of so much death and destruction in Louisiana and Mississippi. President Bush naturally wants to take charge of the federal Katrina probe, but the task requires an independent commission - otherwise the administration is investigating itself... The White House has been whining that critics are playing a ‘blame game,’ conveniently ignoring that it won’t be possible to rejuvenate the recovery effort if no one knows what went awry. Washington pols are already arm wrestling over who should oversee the main Katrina inquiry. The task requires an independent panel.” [Editorial, 9/8/05]
- **Hartford Courant (Connecticut):** “The chaotic, initially inadequate response -- by governments at all levels -- to the devastating hurricane that killed perhaps thousands as it tore through Louisiana and Mississippi requires a thorough investigation by an independent national

commission. President Bush's comment that he will lead such an investigation would be laughable if not for the seriousness of this national tragedy and the inexcusable bungling that vastly increased the suffering of tens of thousands of people trapped in flooded New Orleans. A review led by Mr. Bush would lack credibility... Congress and the president must create an independent body composed of members with no current government connections and with impeccable credentials, much like the bipartisan 9/11 Commission that investigated the 2001 terrorist attack on the United States." [Editorial, 9/8/05]

- **San Antonio Express-News:** "Calling for a congressional investigation into the disaster, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee promised 'a hard, hard look' at the federal response system. But that 'hard, hard look' should not be spearheaded by President Bush, who said he would head such an investigation, or Congress. This is the wrong approach at the wrong time. The president is too close to the situation. Bush's motives, however noble they might be, would be tainted by the perception of politics. Congress is responsible for funding decisions that may have played a role in the situation. What the nation needs is an independent entity, modeled after what has become the blueprint for such probes, the 9-11 commission." [Editorial, 9/8/05]
- **St. Petersburg Times (Florida):** "President Bush transformed FEMA into a shell of its old self, so he cannot be the one who oversees an investigation of 'what went right and what went wrong,' as he vowed. Not much went right. So Congress will have to take on that responsibility and make it credible. It should consider appointing a prestigious, independent commission as it did after the 9/11 intelligence failures." [Editorial, 9/8/05]
- **Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia):** "The 9/11 Commission set the appropriate example. The panel examined the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in an atmosphere free of political posturing and editorial cant. Its report earned widespread respect for its judicious analysis and clear insight. Hurricane Katrina requires a similar response. The victims deserve no less. The administration and Congress plan investigations. An independent commission remains the best route." [Editorial, 9/7/05]
- **Salt Lake Tribune (Utah):** "President Bush has pledged to get to the bottom of it all. So have leading members of Congress. But a lot of active politicians sniffing each other is only something they do to make themselves feel useful while other people are doing the hard work and the unspeakable suffering. What is needed here is a special, expert commission along the lines of the independent 9/11 commission or the expert body that investigated the loss of the space shuttle Challenger. The poor response to Katrina and the loss of the shuttle Columbia show that the past repeats itself despite our best efforts. But those efforts must still be made." [Editorial, 9/7/05]
- **St. Louis Post-Dispatch:** "Oh yes, when the water recedes and the rebuilding begins, when the dead are buried and the living resume their lives, there will be plenty about the government's failures to investigate, but it shouldn't be done by Mr. Bush. It should be done by an independent, bipartisan commission, similar to the 9/11 Commission or the shuttle Columbia Accident Investigation Board. As President Ronald Reagan used to say, trust -- but verify." [Editorial, 9/7/05]
- **The Tennessean (Nashville, Tennessee):** "President Bush said yesterday he would lead an investigation to find out what happened. Members of Congress also voiced intentions to hold hearings on the response. The president should certainly ask tough questions throughout his administration, but the American people need to see an independent entity look into the events. They simply aren't likely to trust a government assessment of the government's own failures... An independent panel, perhaps a parallel to the 9/11 Commission that performed such a valuable service, is in order." [Editorial, 9/7/05]