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Good afternoon. On behalf of the Members of the Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response, let me welcome our colleagues from the Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery. I would especially like to single out Senator Landrieu for her tireless efforts to expedite the recovery process on behalf of her constituents who felt the full brunt of Hurricane Katrina. Today's rare bicameral, joint subcommittee hearing is an opportunity for Members to receive testimony from key FEMA and General Services Administration (GSA) officials along with key State officials and non-profit organizations from Louisiana and Mississippi regarding the management of donated household goods intended for survivors of Hurricane Katrina. FEMA's shortcomings in response to Hurricane Katrina have been well-documented.

Today's joint subcommittee hearing will be forward looking in the sense that we want to examine the lessons learned to ensure that the intended survivors of catastrophes do in fact receive the goods that have been donated for such purposes. Specifically, I am looking forward to our witnesses' discussion of FEMA's handling and distribution of unsolicited donated goods in response to Hurricane Katrina; and, the current system FEMA has implemented to receive and distribute donated goods.

This hearing will also be an occasion for Members to examine the steps that FEMA has taken to improve its logistics operations especially since the enactment of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (P.L.109-295). Many of us were disturbed to see the CNN investigation on June 11th entitled "FEMA Gives Away \$85 Million of Supplies for Katrina Victims", which outlined that the agency was spending more than \$1 million per year to store donated goods that were intended for Hurricane Katrina survivors. Surely, the 16,596 households that still reside in FEMA temporary housing units could have made use of the pallets of cots, cleansers, first-aid kits, coffee makers, and camp stoves were stacked to the ceiling in two GSA warehouse facilities in Fort Worth, Texas. I would like to note that upon learning that the "surplus" goods were intended for Hurricane Katrina survivors, my home State of Texas returned the supplies and delivered them to a New Orleans nonprofit organization on June 20, 2008. So to move on with this hearing, I look forward hearing from Mr. Smith and Mr. Castillo about the concrete steps that FEMA has taken to improve its logistics management when receiving and distributing unsolicited donated goods. Mr. Brasseux, this joint subcommittee wants assurances that the proper procedures regarding the distribution of surplus goods were followed – even though GSA maintains that FEMA did not inform it that the materials in the warehouses were from Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Rainwater, Mr. Davidson, Mr. Stallworth and Ms. Keller, we want to hear about the level of outreach FEMA did regarding the handling and distribution of donated goods. Also, we want to better understand your coordination and cooperation efforts with other States and non-profit organizations that have prioritized service to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. In addition, this joint subcommittee wants to know if your State or non-profit organization has used the Aidmatrix Foundation software to assist you in the availability of donated foods. Also, we want to understand if FEMA informed your State or non-profit organization about the Aidmatrix software, to which FEMA awarded a \$3.5 million dollar grant for the development of a software program to better streamline donated goods. I will note for the record that Aidmatrix chose not to testify today, although they did submit a written testimony for the record. With that, I thank the witnesses for coming and I look forward to a robust discussion about improving the logistic processes and capacities.

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