

10 years, we will not be able to keep our standard of living as we compete with Japan, China, Germany, India, and Great Britain—all who recognize the superiority of American higher education, and are taking significant steps to keep their brightest students home and to improve their institutions.

I am delighted to be able to salute Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY. I know they each will have longer statements to make about the bill and all of its parts. But it is a good piece of legislation for students, it is a good piece of legislation for colleges and universities, and it is an excellent piece of legislation for our country.

I yield the floor.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today—heart-sick—to speak about the absolute devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. This tragedy represents the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history.

This hurricane spared nothing. Estimates of damage now run as high as \$200 billion. The cost, in human lives and suffering, is just staggering.

Tragically, it will take weeks and weeks to ascertain the true loss of life. As the recovery proceeds, I pledge to do all in my power to help those in need to rebuild cities, communities, and shattered lives and families across the Gulf Coast.

My home State of California knows well the destruction possible from natural disasters. So many times the people of California have been saved by the generosity of the American people.

I have no doubt that the people of my State will now rally to the aid of those in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Many already have.

In addition to monetary contributions from residents throughout the State, over 1,500 California first responders are on the scene, as well as over 700 California National Guard personnel, 116 California Highway Patrol officers, eight swiftwater rescue teams, eight urban search and rescue task forces, and six disaster medical assistance teams.

On Tuesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced that California had accepted a request from FEMA to provide housing and assistance for 1,000 storm victims left homeless by the hurricane. San Diego has made 600 beds available, San Francisco 300, and San Jose 100. And if FEMA asks for more, the State will be ready. Los Angeles has planned accommodations for 2,000 evacuees and Sacramento County is preparing for 300.

Campuses of the University of California and California State University systems, as well as private colleges and universities from across the State, have opened their doors to college students who were displaced or had their educational plans interrupted by the hurricane. Hundreds of students have

already taken advantage of these opportunities and will be starting classes this fall.

My heart goes out to all those suffering from this catastrophe. I have seen the destruction caused by massive mudslides, major earthquakes, and torrential rains. I have seen the fear and hopelessness that comes when families lose everything except the shirts on their backs. My thoughts and prayers are with those Americans in the pitch dark with no electricity, in shelters with their homes swept away, and with a future that seems without hope.

I commend all those who have worked literally around the clock in response to the disaster. The emergency responders—from the National Guard and Coast Guard to hospital workers to the local police and fire departments—have been nothing short of heroic. They are risking their lives and deserve our deep gratitude.

The American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and many other charitable organizations and religious groups have mobilized thousands of volunteer workers to bring aid and shelter to victims of the devastation.

The American people are already demonstrating their tremendous compassion and magnanimity—contributions exceed \$500 million, with surely much more to come. Nations from around the world have also offered to help. I thank them as well.

But despite the effort and concern of all these individuals, I am shocked at what has gone terribly wrong in preparation for Hurricane Katrina. What we saw in the days following the storm has been a massive failure of government on all levels to anticipate, prepare, and respond. Days before the storm FEMA knew it was coming. It was announced well in advance that Katrina had become a lethal category 5 storm as it made its way through the Gulf of Mexico.

To see the horrific images of the dead lying in the street unattended, bodies floating aimlessly facedown in the water, and Americans with no choice but to relieve themselves on the field of the Superdome—it boggles the mind that such depraved conditions descended on one of America's great cities.

It was a flat embarrassment to the country. Those who have lost loved ones deserved much better than these appalling conditions.

Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN have launched a Governmental Affairs Committee oversight investigation to ensure that the requisite support and resources go to those in need. They will also be examining the inadequate preparation and response to this disaster.

Senator CLINTON and others have called on President Bush to appoint an independent national commission to review Hurricane Katrina relief efforts modeled after the 9/11 Commission.

I completely support these efforts, and would like to go on record with a few of the serious concerns that I have

regarding what has taken place. These are all problems that we must grapple with if we are to truly protect our homeland from disasters of all kinds.

Two days before the storm, a mandatory evacuation order went out for the residents of New Orleans. But didn't Federal, State, and local authorities know that tens of thousands of city residents lacked the funds and means to depart and, more fundamentally, had nowhere to go?

As a result, the poor stayed put: stranded throughout the city and away from any safe and secure shelter. Clearly there is not an adequate mechanism for removing Americans out of harm's way in the face of a crisis.

Warning systems and evacuation plans, prepositioning of transportation assets and emergency communications facilities, are all in dire need of an overhaul.

As always in these situations, the first priority is to save lives. Once the storm had passed, emergency responders went to dramatic lengths to save those stranded in houses, in apartments, and on rooftops throughout the region. Through their tireless efforts, thousands have been saved.

But what should have been an immediate and massive delivery of food, water, and medical supplies to evacuees came much too late. Thousands of hurricane victims went for days without anything to eat or drink. Babies went without formula. Diabetics went without insulin. People took refuge on freeways only to bake in the heat without relief or water and nowhere to go.

I realize the unprecedented magnitude of this disaster. But the delay in response was simply inexcusable. It pains me to admit that people died because aid did not arrive fast enough to those in need.

Downtown, New Orleans' Charity Hospital went unevacuated for days with no food, clean water, or basic medical supplies. These represent the sickest and neediest of the storm victims, and all efforts should have been made for their immediate evacuation—by boat to reach the hospital or at least helicopter airlifts from the roof if possible. Vigilant doctors, nurses, and other hospital workers performed courageously but did not have the support they needed.

There seemed to be no plan in place for providing shelter once the storm was over. Ad hoc decisions appeared to cause widespread confusion as desperate evacuees did not know where to find basic needs. Rumors swirled of food here and fuel there, forcing victims to scavenge in search of the basic necessities of life.

As regional evacuation centers filled there was no effective plan for long or even short-term shelter and care of displaced residents. With nowhere for storm victims to go, evacuation centers turned to squalor. Serious reports of abuse and assault have come out of these shelters.

Other cities graciously volunteered to open facilities to evacuees. For that

I offer them my sincere gratitude. But now even they have reached capacity—the Houston Astrodome, for example. We were just not prepared to handle an evacuation of this magnitude.

We were quickly and brutally reminded that an effective response to this type of tragedy cannot happen until a reasonably safe situation exists on the ground. This is nothing new. It is a given in these types of situations.

Yet days passed before adequate National Guard troops arrived. Meanwhile, thugs, miscreants, and ruthless pillagers terrorized the streets and thwarted rescue and aid.

Command and control breakdowns have been rampant. Throughout the region, complaints abound that no one seems to be in charge. This is a recipe for chaos, which only works to hamper relief efforts and put innocent people in serious danger. Again, this points to the fact that we do not have adequate plans and mechanisms for dealing with serious disasters.

Regrettably, I could go on, but the time for dealing with the faults in preparation and response has not yet come. Right now, the victims of Hurricane Katrina need our help. Entire communities have been destroyed. Families have been torn apart. Many are still missing. Tens of thousands remain homeless. We must find a way to help bring some stability and hope back into their lives.

Congress has made a start by keeping FEMA operations running through an immediate \$10.5 billion appropriation last week. And the President has asked for \$51.8 billion more, which Congress will surely approve soon. But even this will not be enough—we have just begun the effort to rebuild these cities and communities.

This is a process that will take years to accomplish and require a great deal of commitment on our part. I call on all Americans to do what they can to assist in the recovery efforts. There are countless opportunities and help is vitally needed.

As we move forward together as a nation, we also need to focus on concrete solutions for improving our preparedness for calamities that engulf any part of the country.

In close cooperation with State and Federal emergency agencies, each city in this country absolutely must have an effective emergency plan in place.

These plans need to include professional and skilled emergency operations directors, clear lines of authority, practical evacuation strategies, and previously determined command centers that can be up and running on a moment's notice with satellite connections and powered by their own generators. Key department heads should carry two-way radios with extra battery packs at all times.

The plans also must have mechanisms to immediately call for and facilitate the delivery of food, water, and medical supplies to areas in need.

But it is not enough to just have a plan in place. These plans must be re-

hearsed and drilled until they become second nature for the public agencies, emergency responders, and communities involved. When disaster strikes, there can be no confusion as to what must happen.

Unfortunately, even when effective and rehearsed plans exist, large-scale catastrophic events, such as Hurricane Katrina, can quickly overwhelm local jurisdictions.

In these cases, we need a system in place that allows the Federal Government to come in immediately with the full force of its resources and assume primary responsibility for response and relief.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors should convene a national intercity effort to share information and assist in emergency preparation efforts.

In emergency situations such as this, communications capabilities are essential. Emergency responders must have the equipment that will allow essential communications efforts to continue in case of the major damage to infrastructure we have seen in New Orleans.

Clearly, the Federal Emergency Management Agency needs to change. We need to look at whether the tasks charged to FEMA are too large to be included with 21 other agencies under the Department of Homeland Security.

Let us seriously consider professionalizing FEMA from top to bottom—some have called for the resignation of the current Director, Michael Brown, whose credentials as an emergency manager have been widely questioned.

FEMA needs to be devoid of political appointees and employ only the highest trained professionals with expertise in transportation, emergency medical aid, communications, and providing Federal disaster assistance.

Funds Congress appropriates for FEMA from this point forward ought to be prioritized for disaster preparation, and we need to intensively review programmatic appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security which, some critics point out, has received funds diverted from the levee project in New Orleans.

We have a Strategic Petroleum Reserve, but shouldn't we have a strategic food and water reserve too, that can, within hours, be airlifted into directly and brutally hit areas such as New Orleans?

We need preplanned, carefully thought out means for moving National Guardsmen and other military forces and particularly assets, such as high-water vehicles and Chinook transport helicopters, swiftly into place to prevent urban areas from sinking into anarchy—as was so painfully evident at the convention center in New Orleans and throughout the city.

The Army Corps of Engineers, the administration and Congress knew for years about New Orleans' vulnerable topography and the inherent weaknesses of the 350-mile city levee system but limited funding for flood control work nonetheless—why?

The administration and Congress need to conduct a nationwide assessment to determine the other most vulnerable areas and have Federal disaster assistance resources pre-positioned if possible so no time is lost in the aftermath of another future tragedy.

These are just a few ideas to consider. President Bush was conveniently understating the case last Thursday when he said that federal efforts were "not acceptable".

Americans have an obligation to come together, now, with their resources, money, and can do spirit to save New Orleansians, their great city, and all those suffering down the Gulf Coast.

Nothing less is acceptable.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to address the national crisis we are facing in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. It is hard to even begin estimating the extent to which this natural disaster will affect all of us and, most particularly, our fellow Americans along the gulf coast. I extend my deepest sympathies to the victims and loved ones of this unprecedented disaster. My thoughts and prayers are with all those in need.

Katrina is likely the largest natural disaster this nation has ever faced. The storm's impact is unfathomable, and an entire region has been irrevocably affected. I cannot conceive of a perfect evacuation or mitigation effort for a circumstance of this magnitude. I urge people to refrain from allocation of blame. Finger pointing will only make matters worse. For now we must show our strength as Americans: we must do the best that we can with what we have.

Our first priority must remain search and rescue. We are working to save as many lives as we can, and to send aid to those victims who at this time are without adequate shelter, food, and water. We need to bring relief to those who are living this nightmare, beginning with the most vulnerable—children, elderly, those in need of medical attention—and moving outward to encompass all those who can be reached. Once we have ensured the basic health and safety of those in need, our next priority will be to begin restoring some quality of life. Many have lost everything. Until the region is stabilized, they will need somewhere to go, somewhere to work, somewhere to be with their families, somewhere to begin rebuilding their lives.

Last Friday, the Senate acted and passed a \$10.5 billion emergency funding package for New Orleans; however, we will need to give more Federal money for disaster relief. I recognize that this will be costly, and although I am an advocate for fiscal responsibility, this is a time for the Federal Government to act.

We also need to reach into our own pockets and be as generous as we can be. I encourage my fellow members, my fellow Ohioans, and my fellow Americans to contribute to this relief effort

by calling the Red Cross at 1-800-HELP-NOW, or visiting their website at www.RedCross.org. The Department of Homeland Security website, www.dhs.gov, also has valuable information for those wishing to make a monetary donation or to offer other services such as housing, and many local communities and faith-based groups have set up collection agencies. Opportunities to give are readily available, and the need is great.

I would like to thank all those who have already opened their hearts and homes, and have given whatever is in their power to give. The response of this Nation, as well as many foreign countries, has been remarkable. Individuals, businesses, and governments—all have answered this call to meet human needs, and this effort will demand that all levels of government work together to ensure that what needs to get done, gets done.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the dedication of those who have offered tireless assistance to the victims of Katrina. In the last eight days, the Coast Guard alone has saved over 30,000 people, more than the cumulative number of its search and rescue operations for the last 10 years combined. Their relief effort has been simply incredible. I am proud of the Coast Guard men and women who have truly exhibited *semper paratus*.

Katrina also reminds us of how important our National Guard troops are in a time of crisis. From across the United States, there are some 41,500 National Guard troops that are on duty along the Gulf Coast. I am very proud of Ohio's National Guard, which have deployed a total of 1,500 soldiers and airmen to support Operation Buckeye, Ohio's hurricane response operation. This includes the 437th Military Police Battalion, the 1-148th Infantry Battalion and the 73rd TC-Task Force Command from Columbus; the 371st Corps Support Group from Kettering; and the 269th Combat Communications Squadron from Springfield. As we review the many policy concerns that have emerged in response to Katrina, it will be important to look at the issues facing our National Guard and to work to support them.

I have only mentioned the Coast Guard and the National Guard, but approximately 100,000 people are now involved in relief efforts. These people have chosen service over self and demonstrated their dedication to their fellow Americans. I am inspired by their efforts and I thank them for their service. We owe them all our gratitude and respect.

In addition, words cannot express my gratitude for the 20 States that have welcomed some 235,000 survivors from the gulf region. I would also note the contributions that my home state is making to the recovery effort, in addition to the contributions of the Ohio National Guard. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources deployed 24 officers with 10 boats and 10 vehicle-trailer

combinations to Louisiana. In addition, hundreds of Ohio police officers and firefighters have gone or are on call to go to Louisiana and Mississippi to assist with the recovery effort. I am pleased that Ohio has opened its arms and stands ready to receive over 1,000 victims. In preparation, the State Emergency Management Agency, in conjunction with their local partners, is already locating housing, schools, and support services for families who have been displaced. As a former Mayor of Cleveland and Governor of Ohio, I am extremely proud of the Buckeye State's response.

However, Mr. President, in my current capacity as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have many questions about the timely response to this catastrophe which have yet to be answered. In my position, I will work to make sure these questions are answered because we need to understand what went right and what went wrong in order to better prepare for natural disasters. At this juncture, it is too early to prejudge the overall successes and failures of each level of government during this disaster, or answer questions such as, "Should FEMA be part of DHS?" Those answers should be provided only after a careful and thorough assessment of the entire situation. I would like to recognize the leadership of Senator COLLINS and Senator LIEBERMAN, the chair and ranking member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and I look forward to working with them as we examine the response of all levels of government. However, right now, our responders have a job to do on the gulf coast, and our first objective should be to offer whatever assistance it is within our power to give.

Even though we are just beginning to wrap our arms around the magnitude of this event, I would offer some initial thoughts as to how we might mitigate the damage from future natural disasters like Katrina.

The responsibility of planning for, and responding to, natural disasters is shared by all levels of government. But as a former Mayor of Cleveland and Governor of Ohio, I know firsthand the paramount importance of State and local first responders. Therefore, I implore every State and local emergency preparedness organization to review their action plans to ensure that they have the proper procedures and contingencies in place to deal with a catastrophic event. The emergency planning and response capabilities must be reviewed and, if necessary, rewritten to address every possible incident for a given geographic location. The safety of our citizens and communities depends on it.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, I began working with the State of Ohio's Emergency Management Agency in efforts to assess the ability of the State to prevent, protect, respond to and re-

cover from any disaster, whether natural or otherwise. The State of Ohio is currently conducting a thorough top to bottom review of their strategic and emergency operations plans. It is my hope that these reviews will be conducted by every State.

I would also highlight a Federal program that can help prepare State and local first responders. Earlier this year I offered an amendment to the Homeland Security Appropriations bill to increase funds for the Emergency Management Performance Grant program. The EMPG program is the only source of Federal assistance that provides vital emergency management, coordination and planning support to State and local governments and first responders for all hazards. I believe that by investing in a program with a proven track record, recovery from events like Katrina will be more effective, and the EMPG should receive even higher levels of funding. I will continue in my efforts to ensure that the Federal Government stresses preparation for all hazards: we must be prepared for both terrorism and all of the blows that nature can deal.

Hurricane Katrina also shows that we have serious needs for the repair and improvement of our Nation's aging infrastructure and waterway systems. The desperate conditions these systems are currently in are impacting our economy, the environment, and the welfare of the American people. The backlog of unfunded Army Corps of Engineers operation and maintenance projects mandated by Congress is \$1.2 billion. This is up from \$250 million when I arrived in the Senate in 1999.

It has been 5 years since Congress passed a water resources and development reauthorization bill. The passage of another WRDA bill cannot be delayed any further. It is simply too important to our Nation in terms of its benefits to our economy and environment and for the speedy recovery for the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The economic benefits of infrastructure projects speak for themselves. The national return on investment for the Mississippi Valley and Tributary system—the system affected by Hurricane Katrina—is \$24 for each dollar spent, according to the National Waterways Conference. The Corps of Engineers flood damage reduction program saves lives and prevents almost \$8 in damages for each dollar spent.

Right now our infrastructure is collapsing due to insufficient funding. We desperately need to provide increased funding for the Army Corps of Engineers. Currently, the Corps is able to function only at 50 percent capacity at the rate of funding proposed by the Office of Management and Budget. With proper investment from Congress, our waterways and ports have the potential to help strengthen our economy, help ease our Nation's growing congestion problem, and provide a better quality of life.

This devastating hurricane also served to underscore the fragile nature of our national and economic security when the energy spigot went from a full flow to merely a drip. I praise my colleague and Chairman of the Energy Committee, Senator DOMENICI, for his Herculean task of shepherding an energy bill through this body. That bill is a tremendous step toward a much larger goal, which is our Nation's energy independence. However, in the aftermath of the energy bill's passage, we should not assume those efforts will suffice.

Rather, the effects of this hurricane on our Nation's energy supply and the ripple effects sent through the economy should only heighten the clarion call for our country. Much like our Nation committed itself when the Russians launched Sputnik and we entered the race to space, I believe we should have a national commitment to becoming energy independent.

We should open additional domestic resources in the near term to help wean us from foreign oil. My colleagues from Alaska have long sought to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge an idea I support. We should also invest in clean coal technologies that will help utilize one of our Nation's cheapest and most abundant resources.

However, we should also look ahead. For instance, a great deal of research has been done in my State on hydrogen fuel cells. I have heard that within a decade, commercial applications for these fuel cells will be a real possibility. But I would ask, why 10 years? Why not five? I truly believe there is too much at stake to ignore or merely feign interest in becoming energy independent.

I do not think it hyperbole to say that one of the main factors that will determine the next great superpower will be the nation that is able to become energy independent. The commitment we make today will determine the safety and quality of life future generations will have. I pray that we heed this warning.

Finally, I would like to address an issue related to Hurricane Katrina, and that is the soaring gasoline prices across the Nation. In the wake of the horrible tragedy caused by Hurricane Katrina, it now appears that some individuals may be profiting off the misfortune of others. This is unconscionable. It is unfortunate that there are no Federal laws in place to address and stop the price gouging of gasoline. In fact, less than half of our States have laws on the books to protect consumers from price gouging. Therefore, I am considering legislation to provide the Federal Government with the requisite authority to investigate cases of gasoline price gouging during an emergency. This proposed legislation would resolve this issue by providing a Federal framework for protecting consumers against this unjustifiable business practice. I would note that I have been actively involved in this issue for

several years. I participated in hearings in 2000, 2002, and 2004 in two different committees, and I have asked Senator COLLINS to explore this issue in the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Mr. President, these are but a handful of the issues that must be addressed in the weeks and months ahead. Let us roll up our sleeves and get to work. Let us learn from this horrible tragedy that has befallen the gulf coast, and forge better laws and procedures for the future. In closing, my heart goes out to the victims of this disaster, and I ask that all Americans do what they can to assist them.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we have seen images we thought we would never see in America. We have been reminded that we are all part of the American family. And we have a responsibility to help members of that family when they are in need.

We in Congress have a responsibility to do all we can in many ways. Let's make sure children don't lose a year of their lives. Let's help them return to as much of a normal environment as possible. We need to act quickly to provide the help they and their parents need to cope with this strategy, and rebuild their future.

We all remember Hurricane Andrew, the category-5 hurricane that left over \$40 billion in damage in 1992. It tore through south Florida, and the Army, Navy, and National Guard pitched in to help schools repair classrooms and reopen the school doors in about 2 weeks.

Last year, Hurricane Charley tore through central Florida and left \$15 billion in damage. Schools closed, but within a month, they returned to normal and students were back on track in their classrooms.

But Hurricane Katrina is a different type of storm, and the magnitude of its damage is vastly more extensive.

In Mississippi alone, 271 schools have been damaged or destroyed. Schools are closed in the three gulf coast cities in the State hit hardest by Katrina: Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula. Those districts enroll 20,000 students.

In North Gulfport, the walls of the Harrison Central 9th Grade School collapsed. In Pascagoula, the roof of St. Martin High blew off. The State superintendent has already requested help from Washington to find portable classrooms. Officials are considering converting an abandoned Kmart into a temporary school.

Vastly more damage has occurred in Louisiana. At least 135,000 students in public schools have been displaced. 100,000 college students have been displaced for the fall semester at Tulane, the University of New Orleans, Xavier University, and Loyola University.

Fortunately, America has begun to respond.

The Houston school district has pledged to accommodate 30,000 displaced students in their schools. The Dallas Public Schools has created a

hotline to streamline enrollment for displaced students. St. Paul, MN is willing to accept 5,000 in its schools.

In Massachusetts, more than 30 colleges and universities have offered to enroll students, and provide housing and tuition assistance.

People have opened their homes and communities have opened their schools. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the principals, the superintendents, and the university presidents and deans who have pledged their help.

But they need help from Congress as they struggle to accommodate these students. We need a response that is as caring and as generous as the American spirit.

We must do all we can to assist schools and colleges as they attempt to meet the incredible challenge of incorporating hundreds or thousands of new students into their systems.

We must provide funds to help ease the transition of students into new school districts, support basic instruction, and purchase books and materials. We must help schools temporarily expand facilities and avoid overcrowding.

We must help college students find temporary help so they don't lose a semester or a year of college, and give them the financial assistance they need to continue.

We must also help former students who are paying off past loans, by offering every affected borrower a 6 month grace period when no further interest will accrue so they can avoid any increased cost or damage to their credit while they get their lives back on track.

Thousands of young children affected by Katrina need temporary space in safe and healthy settings. We must provide them with quality early childhood programs and facilities, until the children and their families can return to their homes and communities.

And in weeks and months ahead, we must focus on rebuilding and reconstructing the schools devastated by the tragedy so that, as soon as possible, children can return to schools fully stocked with the resources they need.

This morning, Senator ENZI and I heard moving testimony in the HELP Committee from Dr. Diane Roussel, Superintendent of Schools in Jefferson Parish in Louisiana. The parish has 85 schools, 51,000 students and 3,600 teachers. It lies just south of New Orleans, and was directly in the path of Katrina.

The local tax base provides a third of the district's resources for education to help students who have been displaced. Now, they're left with nothing to rebuild their schools.

In Dr. Roussel's words:

Money isn't always the answer to solving the ills in our public schools, but when we're talking about equipment, supplies, rebuilding, and maintaining our teaching workforce, money is the answer.

We're reminded in this disaster that schools are the heart of local communities across America. When schools

open, people return. When schools open, business returns, and life begins to return to normal.

In the coming days and weeks, we must act expeditiously to provide the help that the entire gulf coast community needs to re-open its schools. If they get what they need, I am confident they will come back, stronger than ever before. Let's get it done.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment, on behalf of myself, my fellow Vermonters and Americans across this country, to express our heartfelt gratitude for the outpouring of generosity by more than 90 countries and international organizations that have offered assistance to the recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

The United States is coping with devastation and destruction on a scale not seen in our lifetimes. It has been shocking and sobering to see how woefully unprepared our Government was to help the victims of this disaster. The chaotic response has also raised serious concerns about the adequacy of our preparedness to respond to terrorist attacks, despite the many billions of dollars the Department of Homeland Security has spent since 9/11.

Yet if there is a silver lining in such a disaster it is that it unites Americans and it unites the world in the common cause of alleviating suffering. A massive relief effort is underway, albeit belatedly, involving everyone from the Coast Guard to the Red Cross to private citizens who are rescuing people who were stranded and caring for those who lost their homes and possessions. Organizations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Program, World Health Organization, UNICEF and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees have all contributed personnel and resources to help in the recovery. Canadian search and rescue teams from as far away as British Columbia were on the ground in some Louisiana communities as early as August 31, even before FEMA had mobilized American relief workers.

It is not often that we, the world's only superpower, find ourselves on the receiving end of foreign aid. It is almost always the other way around, when Americans respond, as we do continuously, to the needs of people suffering from famine, conflict and natural disasters overseas. It is notable that our own disaster relief specialists in USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance are assisting in this domestic recovery effort.

The outpouring of sympathy and the hundreds of millions of dollars in contributions by Americans to the victims of the South Asian tsunami earlier this year are today being reciprocated by some of those same countries, and by scores of others.

From the wealthiest European countries and Japan, to the poorest, such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, generous offers of cash, water purification and communications equipment, and emer-

gency and medical personnel have been extraordinarily gratifying.

But while no offers have been expressly rejected by the U.S. Government, few have been accepted and received. It is regrettable that our Government's abysmal coordination in the early days of the recovery effort has prevented critical international aid from being delivered to our stricken citizens and communities in the affected Gulf states.

One of many examples is Canada's offer to send three warships and a Coast Guard vessel. They were delayed for a week due to bureaucratic inertia.

I know that in any major humanitarian crisis when unsolicited offers of aid pour in it is difficult to coordinate and use it immediately. Some is simply not usable, such as electric generators that require a voltage not readily available in this country. There are also problems of limited access to airfields and ground transportation, and the necessary personnel to handle and distribute it. But these obstacles should have been anticipated. Bureaucratic backlogs and bungling have kept foreign relief planes grounded for days, medical personnel on standby, and tons of supplies waiting to be delivered to the desperate people of Louisiana and Mississippi.

The sluggish response has left foreign governments frustrated and baffled. I think it needs to be emphasized how much we welcome and appreciate their generous offers of help. It is unfortunate that our government was so unprepared to receive this aid in a timely manner, when lives could have been saved and suffering alleviated. Let us hope that the bottlenecks are being removed so the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and particularly FEMA, can speed the delivery of aid from our friends around the world without further delay.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On February 27, 2004, James Maestas and Joshua Stockham received extensive physical injuries by a group of men after a confrontation at a restaurant in Santa Fe, NM. The apparent motivation for the beating was that they were a gay couple. Maestas, who spent more than a week in intensive care, had to undergo extensive physical and speech therapy, according to the district attorney.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend

them against the harms that are born out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

BROAD SUPPORT FOR RESPONSIBLE GUN STORAGE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, according to a report last year by the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, teenagers and children are involved in more than 10,000 accidental shootings in which close to 800 people die each year. Further, about 1,500 children age 14 and under are treated in hospital emergency rooms for unintentional firearm injuries per year. About 38 percent of them have injuries severe enough to require hospitalization. We can do more to reduce the number of these tragedies, the vast majority of which could be prevented if safe gun storage techniques were more widely practiced.

A study released Tuesday by researchers from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, reportedly the largest of its kind ever carried out, analyzed the prevalence of firearms in homes and the storage practices of gun owners. Researchers analyzed survey results from more than 240,000 randomly selected households in all 50 States and the District of Columbia.

While the rates of gun ownership and the storage practices vary widely from State to State, the CDC researchers found that nearly a third of households in the U.S. have firearms. According to the study, in 18 different States more than 10 percent of households contain loaded firearms. In one State, the number is higher than 19 percent. In addition, in 23 different States more than 5 percent of households keep firearms unlocked and loaded. The most startling statistic revealed by researchers is that 1.69 million children in the U.S. live in households where firearms are kept unlocked and loaded.

Statistics like these should give us pause, especially when we consider the impact that safe gun storage practices can have on preventing accidental shootings and suicides by kids using guns. A study published recently in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that the risk of unintentional shooting or suicide by minors using a gun is reduced by as much as 61 percent when ammunition in the home is locked up. Simply storing ammunition separately from the gun reduces such occurrences by more than 50 percent.

Recently, I joined with 69 of my colleagues in voting for an amendment offered by Senator KOHL that would require licensed dealers, manufacturers, and importers to include a safe gun storage or gun safety device with every handgun they sell. Hopefully Senator KOHL's amendment will become law.

We can do more to help stop accidents involving children and guns. I