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- **Ten Great Ways To Help**

Whether you can offer tech skills, housing, volunteer time or hard cash, there are [many ways to help support](#) the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

- **Background**

[News from NOLA](#)

The Times-Picayune's website provides continuous and detailed updates, along with photo galleries, weblogs and message boards.

[The New Standard](#)

Investigations into the disaster behind the disaster.

- **Recommended Sites**

[Survival of New Orleans](#)

Michael Barnett updates his blog, The Interdictor, throughout the day with firsthand reports of events in New Orleans.

[Attytood](#)

A blog by Will Bunch, a staff writer for the Philadelphia Daily News, with provocative news and analysis of Katrina.

[Team Rescue](#)

An organization set up by Native New Orleans rapper Master P and his wife Sonya Miller, to help families displaced by the disaster.

How Katrina Keeps on Hurting

By [Neil Peirce](#), [Stateline.org](#). Posted [November 1, 2005](#).

The flood waters have receded and residents are rebuilding their lives, but the Bush Administration's failure to take charge of the reconstruction will leave deep scars across the nation.

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Katrina keeps on hurting. America's most vicious storm in a century left hundreds of thousands homeless, incurring its deepest scars on the lives of the poor.

And now, Katrina is about to hurt again, not this time by the force of nature but by the very odd decisions being made by President Bush and power-wielders in Congress.

The George Bush side of the ongoing hurt is his continued refusal -- notwithstanding many calls, from inside and outside his own party -- to designate a responsible federal official to guide the Gulf recovery

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effort.

Susan J. Douglas

Why? His aides say the president is concerned that such a post might "compete with state and local decision-makers."

More stories by [Neil Peirce](#)

How odd. Here's the president who rushed to the scene of hurricane-ravaged New Orleans, bringing in his own power supply to pose before cameras in a darkened city and proclaim to America: "We will do what it takes, we will stay as long as it takes, to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives." It would be, he said, "one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen."

Now those expansive promises seem in full retreat. After an initial rush of spending, according to an investigative report in the Los Angeles Times, the administration has been unable to make use of most of the billions of dollars it requested right after Katrina, and is offering only the sketchiest accounting of the money it has spent.

And if the Bush camp has thought through a creative federal-state-local partnership to work on these challenges, it's a deep secret.

The White House still wants to try out the free-market cures the president first mentioned -- a Gulf Opportunity Zone providing tax breaks for small businesses, and an Urban Homesteading Act to help low-income families build homes.

But for devastated communities, there are many, many more critical needs -- starting with assurance of water, power, and security, planning for where redevelopment may and may not occur, restoring basic government services, and bringing in banks and insurers.

"Where once you had an operating society, now there's nothing -- no firetruck, no school, no grocery store," says Rep. Richard Baker, R-La.

Baker says Washington should create a Louisiana Recovery Corp. that could make commitments to rebuild entire communities, providing critical assurances to returning residents. In the Senate, Judd Gregg, R-N.H., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., have proposed a Cabinet-level Gulf Coast Recovery and Disaster Preparedness Agency that would channel funds to the region, twinned with a board of state and local officials to design a rebuilding plan.

But so far, indications are the White House wants neither.

Jack Kemp, former housing and urban development secretary under the first President Bush, decries the White House position: "There has to be some federal leadership here. ... Laissez-faire, Darwinian capitalism is not going to work here. Markets do work, but they need the direction of government in situations like this," Kemp told the Times.

Another reason for direct federal leadership, says Mark Muro of the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program: the federal government is deeply implicit in the social disaster that Katrina unveiled. For 60 years, federal housing policy actually encouraged concentrating the poor in special enclaves, almost exclusively in flood-prone sections of New Orleans. Federal highway spending promoted middle-class dispersion from the city and development on wetlands susceptible to flooding.

The federal post-Katrina effort, Muro argues, should engage local officials in determining sound land-use decisions, creating new "neighborhoods of choice and connection," requiring local inclusionary zoning as a prerequisite for new federal housing assistance, investing in transit for mobility of all classes, and restoring the delta's long-abused ecosystem.

But the administration shows scant interest in such issues; one has to wonder if it even comprehends them. Result: lack of meaningful federal engagement in recovery. Recovery delayed, misguided. The hurt goes on.

Just as hurtful, check Congress and the ascendant House Republican Study Committee, made up of 100-plus ultra-conservative members. It wants to start paying for the Katrina bill by cutting somewhere between \$35 billion and \$50 billion from programs of chief benefit to America's poor and near-poor. Among the programs to be slashed: food stamps, Medicaid, student loans, child-care support and the earned-income tax credit.

Also being considered for elimination or deep reductions: energy-efficiency and renewable-energy programs. On top of that, federal housing outlays are already set for significant cuts.

But what about the \$70 billion in future tax cuts, mostly for America's very wealthy, that's also included in the budget before Congress? No, we can't touch that, say the congressional powers that be.

In short, the same myopia, the same failure to invest in people and a sound environment that Katrina revealed so painfully, is to be repeated. The hurt goes on, now to be spread to people in need across 50 states.

Neil Peirce is a member of the Washington Post Writers Group and is the founder of the [Citistates Reports](#).

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