

**TESTIMONY OF MARSHA MEEKS KELLY  
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**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
“MOVING MISSISSIPPI FORWARD: ONGOING PROGRESS  
AND REMAINING PROBLEMS”**

**June 19, 2008**

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Graves, and other members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the state of Mississippi and our office of volunteerism, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony about “Mississippi Moving Forward, Our Ongoing Progress and Remaining Problems”.

No one can deny that the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated not only infrastructure and property, but also the livelihood and quality of life across the Gulf Coast. By most accounts the Gulf Coast needs a minimum of 80,000 affordable housing units. In our best year in Mississippi, we built 3,000 homes. This means that in 25 years the current demand would be met. But even if we double that effort and build 6,000 homes each year, we still have 10 years of rebuilding ahead of us.

Many decisions, financial investments and service offerings have been executed using anecdotal information and in some cases, old-fashioned hunches as we work with individuals and families that are still recovering 33 months later. Our agency, the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, the state’s office of volunteerism, is still critical to connecting the human voice in recovery which has been often overlooked by the sound of progress in rebuilding infrastructure. With nearly 700,000 volunteers that MS can document to date, there is no question to anyone in Mississippi that had it not been for the generosity of our US citizens and citizens from other countries as well that we would not be as far along as we are. The nonprofit and faith-based organizations that have responded to Mississippi’s relief, response and recovery have become a part of our story, of our history and critical to our future. How we approach human recovery is critical, we must listen and we must be the voice when those voices are not being heard.

The Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS), state office of volunteerism, **state-level response to Katrina was: Governor Haley Barbour** designated MCVS as the official coordinator of the state’s volunteers and donations. MCVS official functions were

- Early on-the-ground situation assessment for critical operational requirements and appropriate follow-through (e.g., the establishment of staging areas for incoming unaffiliated volunteers, and assistance regarding unaffiliated volunteers who organized large-scale donations and distribution centers throughout the state).

- Set up a Volunteer/Donations Coordination Center to include a Volunteer/Donations Coordination Team and volunteer and donations hotline.
- Established donations receiving and distribution facilities and assisted with the efficient operations.
- Coordinated with the DHS/FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison, congressional affairs, community relations, logistics, and other Federal agencies as necessary.
- Utilized a national donations and volunteer management web-based application (1-800-volunteer.org; MississippiVolunteer.org) that enables the general public to register their offers of donated goods and services.
- Develop and expand the national network of NGO, private-sector, and government representatives and others to encourage effective volunteer and donations management collaboration at the State and local levels.
- Worked in concert with State and local governments, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and the private sector to facilitate an inclusive, multi-agency, communitywide, and coordinated response and recovery effort.
- Worked with local officials and private nonprofit organizations, the State, and others to establish a long-term recovery strategy to address the unmet needs of individuals and families.
- Coordinate nontraditional and new voluntary agencies, existing social service agencies, and other government agencies with formal coalitions such as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and assist with setting up Long-Term Recovery Committees.
- Develop, maintain, and implement a comprehensive volunteer and donations management training program.
- Convene regular interagency meetings with cooperating agencies and other stakeholders to enhance collaboration and information sharing.
- Warehouse support for housing unsolicited donated goods.
- Coordination of unsolicited private and international donations to the Hurricane Recovery Fund.
- Addressed nationally organized collection drives.

Here are some concerns that we would appreciate your focus:

- 1) Pass H.R. 3247 which would authorize FEMA to provide temporary housing units (for examples, trailers and mobile homes) to state and local governments and nonprofit

organizations to house volunteers who are assisting in recovery and reconstruction in the Gulf Coast region. The lack of volunteer housing is an impediment to recovery and the tremendous assistance to building safe and affordable homes. Additionally, please seriously consider changing language in the Stafford Act that would allow for volunteers to be housed and fed in emergency operation centers in the case of a catastrophic event.

- 2) In the FEMA National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Response Framework (NRF) and Annexes elevate the Volunteer and Donation Management Annex to an Emergency Support Function (ESF). It is our belief that the NRF, as currently drafted, does not sufficiently respond to the White House “Katrina Lessons Learned” Report, as it fails to 1) account for the increasingly significant role that volunteers, voluntary agencies and private not for profit agencies and organizations play in disaster response; 2) provide for the development and classification of disaster response capabilities on a national level through ongoing response and preparedness capacity building; and 3) engage existing agencies with appropriate capacity and experience to remove the impediments to supporting and coordinating volunteer management.

There are critical differences in the roles that are played by ESF Annexes versus support annexes. The purpose of ESF Annexes, as defined in the NRF introduction, is to “group capabilities and resources into functions most likely needed during an incident,” while Support Annexes “describe common support processes and specific administrative requirements.” Volunteer and donations management activities conducted in disaster response have evolved with the capability of the Federal and non-governmental sector. These partnerships have expanded and adapted to historic and emerging emergency response models. Designation as “common support processes” has not proven an adequate structure to meet the needs of affected communities or the potential influx of unaffiliated volunteers and unsolicited donations.

Status as an ESF would provide ongoing coordination and leveraging of federal, voluntary and private non-profit, resources and capabilities available in this area. It would allow FEMA to task the ESF to immediate action in support of the integrated federal response effort. Volunteer and donation management organizations have developed broad capabilities that support both independent response activities, such as home repair, debris abatement, and temporary roof repair, as well as the specific response activities that cut across (or are related to) other ESFs such as Mass Care.

Volunteer management is more than a support process; it is a function with defined resources, capabilities and assets available to the federal response effort. As access to participation is enhanced for existing response organizations, new response organizations are likely to emerge. There is currently no mechanism to support emerging response organizations that bring resources and capacity to a federal response. These organizations require support. Additionally, a mechanism must exist to pre-identify and catalog the capacity of partner agencies and organizations. Without question, the revised framework should designate responsibility in the form of a coordinating function for volunteers and donations.

While the proposed NRF supports increased responsibility at the state level, it's necessary to note that most states model their emergency response plans on the federal framework. Recognizing value and worth in integrating the non-governmental sector into emergency response, many states have already established ESFs for Volunteer and Donations Management and support to this function will result in improved response to disasters. Accordingly, implementation of a Volunteer and Donations ESF in the revised NRF will encourage additional states to focus on this important function.

- 3) Mississippi could not have done the coordination work of Volunteer and Donation management if it were not for the Corporation for National and Community Service national service members. Thousands of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps\*NCCC and AmeriCorps\*VISTA participants are still working alongside tens of thousands of volunteers in Mississippi's battle to recover. These national service members who also battling the raging floodwaters, piling sandbags, running shelters and hotlines, and assisting evacuees throughout the Midwest. Through their heroic efforts to save lives, homes, and entire towns, the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service are a godsend to our communities. Mississippi knows first hand how important this body of work is for our homeland security.

Service has always been at the core of America's success and today's national service programs – overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service – are an increasingly important part of our nation's social infrastructure. AmeriCorps, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), Senior Corps, VISTA and Learn and Serve America, are highly effective and leveraged programs that enable Americans to serve together to strengthen their communities and address society's most pressing needs. We need to make a larger investment in this work, and we ask that you start by urging Congress to restore three years of funding cuts.

For fiscal year 2009, we strongly urge you to request a significant investment in our existing national service programs. National service is helping to transform our nation's culture, developing a sense of civic commitment and uniting Americans from all walks of life in shared sacrifice. Americans have stepped forward in record numbers to serve, but continued reductions in funding have prevented the programs from growing at the rate necessary to meet the demand. Increasing the investment in national service programs would deliver enormous benefits to the nation and our democracy, helping to address unmet needs and develop civic competencies.

A dollar spent on national service is leveraged many times over. Independent evaluations show that the benefits generated by the existing service programs are more than worth the federal investment. In fact, the Corporation for National and

Community Service estimates that in 2006 the market value of the services that national service participants provided to the nation was between \$1.8 and \$3.9 billion.

National service is compassionate conservatism at its best: decisions are made locally, programs must engage the private sector to match their federal support, and participants help to expand the reach of community and faith based programs. By design, the national service programs breed excellence through competition, performance review and rigorous evaluation. Now is the time to invest in program growth to meet the growing demand for services and service opportunities. **Reinvest in AmeriCorps State and National Grants, funding the program at its FY04 level of \$312 million.**

After its heroic service in the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the NCCC continues to serve as a key program in the Gulf Coast's long-term recovery efforts. Trained in disaster management and relief, the 1,100 NCCC members can immediately respond to a natural disaster anywhere in the United States. Furthermore, the NCCC builds important leadership skills in its members. NCCC members serve in schools, non-profit organizations and on community projects. The NCCC is a critical element of our nation's disaster preparedness capacity. We request that you fund **NCCC at \$27.5 million**, which would allow the program to operate five campuses in a regional cluster alignment and serve communities in every state. Additionally, Congress has added language to require annual fundraising of \$10 million for the NCCC campuses. Congress should eliminate this requirement. The NCCC program is important enough to provide all the operating expenses since it is authorized by Congress. NCCC should not have an unpredictable stream of funding for this vital cadre of first responders.

State service commissions administer approximately three-fourths of the AmeriCorps State and National funds, and grant oversight is critical to ensure that the federal resources are being utilized effectively and efficiently. State Commission Administrative Grants – matched by Governors and state legislatures – are used to run grant competitions and monitor the performance of sub-grantees. The federal needs to be increased as the administration and oversight requirements have increased. We recommend **\$15.6 million for administrative funding for the state service commission infrastructure**. A healthy state service commission infrastructure will continue to ensure strong, results-oriented programs.

It is critical for the Corporation for National and Community Service to have sufficient resources to ensure that participants in national service programs are able to continue their crucial work and that the community- and faith-based organizations that have come to rely on them can continue to serve their communities. Restoring our investment in AmeriCorps, NCCC, Learn and Serve America, VISTA and Senior Corps will allow more Americans of all ages and

backgrounds to serve, and create greater capacity to meet critical community needs.

- 4) Governor Haley Barbour has asked the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service to play a significant role in Disaster Case Management by partnering with FEMA in this important work. The State of Mississippi is applying for Disaster Relief Grant funds associated with FEMA's Disaster Case Management Pilot (DCM-P) Program. We have reviewed the DCM-P Program Guidance that was provided to the State on May 27, 2008. Based on our review of the program guidance, the State is submitting a proposal; however, we have some questions and concerns. The State's first major concern: the March 1, 2009 deadline must be extended for three years in order to accomplish the ambitious goals of moving all residents still residing in FEMA Temporary Housing Units into safe and affordable housing. That is why this DCM-P Program is mission critical to the citizens of this State, but must be longer than 9 months.

The program guidance indicates that the period of performance for the DCM-P will be June 16, 2008- March 1, 2009, which coincides with the current termination date for FEMA temporary housing assistance. Unfortunately, this termination point does not reflect the housing realities in coastal Mississippi.

According to the guidance: "The DCM-P grantees must be able to transition clients from FEMA supported temporary housing programs to a long term, sustainable housing solution by March 1, 2009." Given the limited housing stock available in coastal Mississippi, this is not an attainable goal within this timeframe. To be most effective, the DCM-P period of performance should be extended until adequate, long term sustainable housing is available for this population, or until the population in need of case management services returns to the pre-Katrina levels.

It is our understanding that FEMA and HUD will cease providing housing assistance on March 1, 2009. We look forward to learning more about FEMA and HUD's program closure plans so that we can better understand and plan for what case management services may be needed, particularly for those that are still in FEMA or HUD Disaster Assistance Housing Program (DHAP) housing at the end of the program. At a minimum, the DCM-P period of performance must be extended beyond the March 1, 2009 housing deadline so that those who remain in temporary housing at that time can be case managed and realistic housing options are identified.

It should be expected that the people still living in temp housing at the end of the program are likely to be the hardest cases and most in need of case management to help move them out when the housing program ends and the State of Mississippi can not manage a large homeless population

The guidance says that FEMA will define the target population and project the number of cases expected to need case management services critical, immediate need for continued case management to assist the most vulnerable survivors in Mississippi – those in travel trailers who must be moved immediately to healthier environments, as well as poor, disabled, elderly, and single parent family households who remain in unstable conditions with no plan for improvement.

Further, while the state of Mississippi continues to move forward with its recovery efforts, much of the funding that has been available for meeting the needs of cases is ceasing to be available at this critical juncture in the recover process. For example, the recent cessation of the American Red Cross Means to Recovery Program will make it very difficult for case managers to be able to receive necessary resources on behalf of the cases that they represent to various Long Term Recovery Committees throughout the state.

Therefore, we do not believe that it is reasonable to expect that 100% of the cases managed under this program will attain the goal of long term sustainable housing without a drastic increase in available rental housing stock and an infusion of funding to the communities that will cover direct services and construction costs associated with rebuilding and rehabilitating homes.

The lack of available housing and a dwindling amount of direct service funds both represent significant boundaries to the recovery efforts thus far as well as potential boundaries to the overall success of this DCM-Pilot program.

At this time we have estimated a number of populations that we expect to serve. Success completion is dependent on the receipt of client information from FEMA and DHAP as well as the ability to locate clients, their willingness to participate, and the availability of housing stock to ensure clients are moved to permanent and stable housing that is safe, secure, and accessible.

Population	Total to be Served
Provide case management to Katrina-Rita survivors who remain in temporary FEMA funded housing. Note: this plan for permanent housing may require transitional temporary housing in order to assure the health and safety of clients	6,334
Provide case management to Katrina-Rita victims who remain in hotels who vacated FEMA temporary housing due to health concerns.	425

Provide case management to those in vulnerable populations who remain un-served or underserved in the Katrina-Rita impacted area, cases remaining at the conclusion of the “bridge” project.	1270
Provide case management to those in vulnerable populations who remain un-served or underserved in the Katrina-Rita impacted area, cases being served by non-Bridge MCMC partners (inclusive of individuals residing in other temporary housing as described in previous sections)	1971
Total	10,000

The State of Mississippi appreciates the opportunity to consider applying for grant funds associated with FEMA’s Disaster Case Management Pilot program and we are asking for FEMA’s support in addressing at a minimum the 10,000 clients listed above.

Other issues of concern are how to support the Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRC’s) and Roundtables. (LTRC’s) and Roundtables are key players in the success of case management’s goals of permanent housing. Mississippi must find a creative solution for LTRC’s or we will not have a Roundtable for the Case Managers to go to solutions. Will FEMA consider as part of this DCM-P Program a model that would allow a percentage of funding to support the LTRC’s administrative costs? For example, when a case is presented to the LTRC Roundtable, and is awarded \$40,000 and that results in the individual being permanently housed, can the LTRC utilize a processing fee at the rate of \_\_\_% with a minimum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ and a maximum of \$\_\_\_\_\_. This is mission critical to the success of the DCM-P Proposal. FEMA can provide many resources for case management, however without funding for the LTRC’s to continue to provide funding and to consolidate funding on behalf of clients, Mississippi will have case management plans without resources to address the needs. LTRC’s are mission central to this work. As we pilot this program let us look for new solutions through the changing definition of the LTRC structure of support.

Lastly, without the nearly 700,000 faith-based and non-profit volunteers that Mississippi can document over the last 33 months who have come to assist in the relief and recovery. Mississippi would not be as far along with repairing and building homes. Through the FEMA’s Disaster Case Management Pilot (DCM-P) Program, the State asks for Public Recruitment staff that can assist with ensuring that the message to national and international groups gets out, “Mississippi needs

your help to finish the job.” Without volunteers and the vital support of faith-based and nonprofits from around the country, this work will not get done.

We appreciate your attention to this important issue, and thank you for your support for more effective use of volunteers and donations in the nation’s response to disasters. We would be glad to provide further information or meet with you to discuss this further. Or better yet, please come, we would love to offer you the South’s Warmest Welcome and let you hear the voices of our people first hand.

Respectfully,

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