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**KENNEDY LEARNS FROM RECOVERY WORKERS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN
NEW ORLEANS**

***OFFERS EDUCATION RELIEF BILL AND DISCUSSES GULF COAST
RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY PROPOSAL***

Washington, DC; Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, along with colleagues from the United States Senate, traveled to the Gulf Region today to assess Hurricane Katrina's damage and recovery efforts. The Senator met with local officials, relief workers, and convened a meeting with African American leaders and the clergy in New Orleans to continue discussing how racial disparities affected the response to Hurricane Katrina and what needs to be done to ensure that all Americans receive the attention they deserve. Before he left, Kennedy introduced a bipartisan Katrina Recovery bill to bring much support and relief to students, educators, and schools affected by the disaster.

“Our government must respond in ways that are as good and compassionate as the American people. We can't just fix the hole in the roof. We need to rebuild the whole foundation,” said Senator Kennedy. “The powerful winds of this storm have torn away that mask that has hidden from our debates the many Americans who are left out and left behind. When we rebuild the land ravaged by the winds and the floods, we must rebuild it for everyone to be a more just and fair land.”

Senator Kennedy has proposed the Gulf Coast Regional Redevelopment Authority, modeled after the Tennessee Valley Authority, to focus full energies on the challenge of rebuilding the Gulf and ensuring new and continued economic prosperity for its residents. It would allow governors and mayors and citizens and communities to work together to plan, help fund, and coordinate for the reconstruction of that damaged region and be led by an eminent American with cabinet rank. Last week Kennedy met with NAACP President Bruce Gordon and other African American Leaders in the United States Capitol to understand the real consequences of government policies that don't unite America, and to discuss an agenda that unites all Americans and provide opportunities to achieve the American dream.

Kennedy and Enzi introduced the first part of legislative relief effort on education last night and plan to offer the health and labor components next week. Last week he and Senator Enzi convened two meetings with recovery experts and officials from the area to determine the best course of action to help. They learned that 700 schools and 30 colleges and universities have been damaged and destroyed and an estimated 473,000 students have been affected by the disaster, most of whom have been displaced. Kennedy's bill begins the process by strengthening

support for educational institutions and addresses the needs of early education, elementary and secondary education, higher education, and students with disabilities. The provisions of the bill are outlined below.

About his bill, Senator Kennedy said, “This disaster reminds us 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. Children can’t lose a year of school, college students should continue pursuing their degrees, parents need extra help to pay to keep their kids in college and everyone deserves the support needed to cope with and overcome this tragedy. In the weeks and months ahead, we must also 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.”