

Opening Statement

**Chairman Michael G. Oxley
Committee on Financial Services**

Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity

**The Federal Role in Facilitating Recovery and Long-term Rebuilding
Efforts in the Gulf Coast Region**

Thursday, March 9, 2006

Thank you, Chairman Ney for scheduling this important hearing today and for the opportunity to hear from Chairman Powell, the Federal Coordinator of the Gulf Coast Rebuilding at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The task of recovery and rebuilding in the Gulf Coast region is a monumental one. Chairman Powell, as a result of your previous service as Chairman of the FDIC, you are a familiar figure to this Committee. The President has made a wise choice in your appointment, and we are looking forward to hearing your insights about the Gulf Coast and to working with you again in this new capacity.

By all accounts, hurricanes Katrina and Rita were the most destructive and costly natural disasters in the United States history.

To date, FEMA has paid out over \$6.3 billion directly to Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims for housing and other needs assistance through the Individual and Household Assistance Program. The \$5.2 billion provided to victims of Hurricane Katrina alone is the most ever provided for any single natural disaster. The combined Katrina-Rita assistance to individuals and households is more than double the combined total of individual and household assistance dollars for the four major Florida hurricanes in 2004, the Northridge Earthquake in 1994 and Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

This Committee has been at the forefront of the hurricane relief effort, having held six hearings with over 100 witnesses, including two hearings in the Gulf Coast region. To date, the Committee has approved eight bills, including three granting statutory waiver authorities to FEMA, HUD, and the Rural Housing Service designed to provide these agencies with the flexibility needed to assist those stricken by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Additionally, the Committee has been involved in efforts to shore up the

National Flood Insurance Program and to ensure that payments to policyholders are available and issued on time.

Today, we are anxious to hear from you about the current state of the recovery and rebuilding efforts. What progress has been made and what challenges and opportunities are ahead?

We are glad that you are here today, Chairman Powell, and I look forward to working with you, Chairman Ney, and others in the Administration, as we move forward to address the needs of those in the Gulf Coast region.