

**Remarks on Recovery Efforts in the Areas Damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Gautier, Mississippi**

March 8, 2006

Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are really honored to be back in Mississippi with the Governor and the first lady. And most of all, we're pleased to be with those who are helping to educate the young here on the gulf coast.

We, of course, want to thank those who are helping this important part of the country rebuild. Part of rebuilding the community is to make sure that the schools are able to function well and teach children how to read and write and add and subtract. Laura and I are committed to making sure no child is left behind anywhere in the United States of America.

Particularly want to thank the superintendent, the principal, and the teachers for helping this important part of the country recover from devastating storm.

And now it's my honor to introduce the First Lady, who is going to make an announcement.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. at College Park Elementary School. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi and his wife, Marsha; Wayne V. Rodolfich, superintendent, Pascagoula School District; and Suzanne Ros, principal, College Park Elementary School. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

**Remarks on New Home Construction in Gautier, Mississippi**

March 8, 2006

**The President.** It's good to hear people hammering, isn't it?

**Governor Haley Barbour.** It really is. It's great for us in Mississippi.

**The President.** It is. People are building their lives back. And one of the reasons I've come down here is to remind people that there's still a lot of people hurting. And I talk to the Governor all the time about what

we can do to make sure this part of the world rebuilds. It's great to see rebuilding.

Haley has been real good about talking to us about a variety of issues. I want to thank you for your leadership.

**Gov. Barbour.** Mr. President, thank you. Let me just say publicly, thank you. In the last day, President Bush and the Bush administration has made the fifth extension of the deadline for the Government to cover 100 percent of debris removal and other emergency measures. And this extension is to June 30th, when we ought to be through.

And first, I want to say thank you for that. You know, it's been a huge issue for these little communities, that they don't have any tax base—so thank you for that. That was made public yesterday. I'm glad to announce today that last night HUD approved our plan for our homeowner grant program. We intend to make \$4 billion of community development block grant money from the Federal Government available to Mississippians, like Jerry and Elaine, so that they can rebuild their homes or build new homes, to get themselves out of the flood plain.

Tomorrow, we have been allowed by HUD to post our plan. You can see it on our web site, [mshomehelp—m-s-h-o-m-e-h-e-l-p— .gov](http://mshomehelp-m-s-h-o-m-e-h-e-l-p-gov), and we'll have to have a 2-week comment period, at the end of which we'll start taking applications. But somebody can go onto the web site now, Mr. President, or at noon tomorrow, and find out all the information they need to get, what all the rules are. And I'm pleased to say that the Akins qualify.

**The President.** That's good.

**Gov. Barbour.** They built this house up above the new flood plain, 25 feet above sea level, which is one of the requirements so that we reduce risks. And thank you for doing that.

**The President.** I always felt that it was really important to say to the Governor and to local folks, "Come to Washington with a plan to help people rebuild." I really didn't want the plan to be designed by Washington people; I wanted it to be designed by local folks. And Haley has put together a Mississippi plan. He not only put the plan together; he also came to Washington, DC, and helped get the plan funded—with the help of two fine United States Senators—