

Prepared, not delivered

Opening Statement

Chairman Michael G. Oxley
Financial Services Committee

Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity

Fair Housing Issues in the Gulf Coast in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rita

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Thank you, Chairman Ney, for scheduling this important hearing today on Fair Housing Issues in the Gulf Coast in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. I want to commend you and Vice-Chairman Miller on your leadership on these issues.

The events surrounding the late-August and early-September hurricanes in the Gulf Coast region have captured the attention of the American people, including this Committee. This Committee has held numerous roundtables, hearings and briefings so that Members, staff and the public can better understand all the issues surrounding the events of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In fact, the Housing Subcommittee held the first Congressional hearings in Louisiana and Mississippi, reviewing the housing issues that the Federal government will need to consider in the next few years. I would note that Speaker Hastert is planning to lead a delegation there soon.

There is no doubt that the devastation is extraordinary and that millions of lives, in and outside the Gulf Coast region, were significantly affected. One of the most immediate and obvious issues is housing. It is unimaginable what families must endure after losing their homes in a sudden natural catastrophe. The January 13, 2006 field hearing in New Orleans highlighted some experiences and practices that could violate the Fair Housing Act.

Today's hearing will focus specifically on fair housing issues, emphasizing the role the Department of Housing and Urban Development and individual groups have in insuring that relocation for temporary or permanent housing for these evacuees is fair and legal.

Chairman Ney, once again, thank you for your leadership on this issue. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and working with you on this issue.