

Government Response Failed Hurricane Victims

From shoring up levies to responding quickly

(AP) — At every turn, political leaders failed Katrina's victims. They didn't strengthen the levees. They ceded the streets to marauding looters. They left dead bodies to rot or bloat. Thousands suffered or died for lack of water, food and hope. Who's at fault?

There's plenty of blame to go around - the White House, Congress, federal agencies, local governments, police and even residents of the Gulf Coast who refused orders to evacuate. But all the finger-pointing misses the point: Politicians and the people they lead too often ignore danger signs until a crisis hits.

It wasn't a secret that levees built to keep New Orleans from flooding could not withstand a major hurricane, but government leaders never found the money to fully shore up the network of earthen, steel and concrete barriers.

Both the Bush and Clinton administrations proposed budgets that low-balled the needs. Local politicians grabbed whatever money they could and declared victory. And the public didn't exactly de-

mand tax increases to pay for flood-control and hurricane-protection projects.

Just last year, the Army Corps of Engineers sought \$105 million for hurricane and flood programs in New Orleans. The White House slashed the request to about \$40 million. Congress finally approved \$42.2 million, less than half of the agency's request.

Yet the lawmakers and Bush agreed to

Look at all they've had to deal with. I'm telling you, nobody ever thought it would happen like this.

a \$286.4 billion pork-laden highway bill that included more than 6,000 pet projects for lawmakers. Congress spent money on dust control for Arkansas roads, a warehouse on the Erie Canal and a \$231 million bridge to a small, uninhabited Alaskan island.

How could Washington spend \$231 million on a bridge to nowhere - and not find \$42 million for hurricane and flood



Hurricane Katrina survivors Janova Jackson (left) and her sister Marion Young, both from the Nigh Ward area of New Orleans, read the newspaper at a shelter in Dallas, Texas. The women, who both worked as housekeepers in a small hotel in the French Quarter, said their side-by-side houses are gone. (AP photo)

projects in New Orleans? It's a matter of power and politics.

Alaska is represented by Republican Rep. Don Young, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, and Republican Sen. Ted Stevens, a senior member of the all-important Senate Appropriations Committee. Louisiana's delegation holds far less sway.

Once the hurricane hit, relief trickled into the Gulf Coast. Even Federal Emergency Management Agency director Michael Brown, whose agency is in charge

of disaster response, pronounced the initial results unacceptable.

Looting soon broke out as local police stood by. Some police didn't want to stop people from getting badly needed food and water. Others seemed to be overwhelmed. Thousands of National Guard troops were ordered to the Gulf Coast, but their ranks have been drastically thinned by the war in Iraq.

On top of all this, Katrina is one of the worst natural disasters ever to hit the United States. The best leaders running

the most efficient agencies would have been sharply challenged.

"Look at all they've had to deal with," former President Clinton told CNN. "I'm telling you, nobody ever thought it would happen like this."

That's not true. Experts had predicted for years that a major hurricane would eventually hit New Orleans, swamping the levees and filling the bowl-shaped city with polluted water. Yet even Bush insisted that nobody anticipated the breach of the levees in a serious storm.

The politicians are doing what they do in time of crisis - shifting the blame.

"The truth will speak for itself," Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., said of potential lapses by government. Later, her office blamed the White House for budget cuts.

If it's not the Republicans' fault, perhaps some in Washington would like to blame New Orleans itself. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., questioned whether a city that lies below sea level should be rebuilt. "That doesn't make sense to me," he said.

But for anybody living - or dying - in the devastated region, there are far too many villains to name.

Robin Lovin, ethics professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, said it's too convenient to blame one branch of government when they are all, at some level, failing people. From Watergate to Clinton's impeachment, governmental institutions have disappointed the public.

In the Neighborhood

How did the government respond to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina?



They responded quicker to the tsunami and that's another country. I'm surprised. It's a shock. We should worry about our own country before somebody else's.
--Elizabeth Farver, Apollo College student

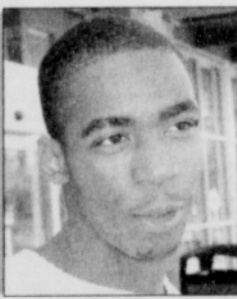


The government knew way in advance the hurricane was coming and should have been better prepared. Relief could have been in place before the damage hit.
--Debbie Moore, mother

I sat through Hurricane Hugo and Alicia. I grew up in south Texas where there was 10 feet of water in my room. The government got on it and they're doing as much as can be done. We can't just snap our fingers and have an answer.
--Tim Kemp, Portland resident



I don't think the president is too much involved. He's just taking his time. It's disappointing.
--Tyler Anderson, Quizno's employee



I understand that the levee system could've been better prepared for hurricanes - that breaks my heart. They're not taking care of it as well as they need to.
--Louise Berg, Portland Community College student



NEW SEASONS MARKET

Spread the word!

Nut Butter & Fruit Spread Tasting This weekend!

Simple and satisfying. There's something timeless about the combination of peanut butter and jelly that attracts people of all ages. We pack peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in our kids' lunch boxes. Others have PB & J for a midnight snack. Some extremists have even been known to scoop spoonfuls right out of the jar.

Lucky for us, the days of choosing between just creamy and crunchy are long gone. There's a whole world of nut butters and jams out there to explore. Visit us this Saturday and Sunday from 11:00am until 5:00pm and taste from our assortment of over 50 nut butters and 100 jams, spreads, and preserves.



Did you know?

It is thought that PB & J sandwiches originated from the World War II US Army ration menu. Returning GIs made peanut butter and jelly sales soar.

EASY & FUN TO SHOP • LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED

NOW OPEN! ARBOR LODGE AT NORTH INTERSTATE AVENUE & PORTLAND BOULEVARD

CONCORDIA STORE NE 33rd & Killingsworth Portland OR 97211 503.288.3838

www.newseasonsmarket.com