

BLACK HISTORY MONTH and the American Experience

Louisiana Rebuilding Plan Proposed, Uncertainties Remain

(AP)—Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco outlined a \$7.5 billion plan to help Louisiana residents rebuild, repair or sell their hurricane-damaged homes, although uncertainties remain about whether Congress will provide the money and which state agency will distribute it.

It is Louisiana's first comprehensive housing proposal since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in August, followed a month later by Hurricane Rita.

"In the not too distant future, I predict the sounds of hammers and saws will be ringing through all of our communities as our homes are rebuilt," Blanco said Monday.

Assistance would be capped at a maximum \$150,000 per homeowner under the proposal. But direct relief is still months away, and homeowners receiving the



A Dorothy and Toto figure from The Wizard of Oz, used for a Mardi Gras float, sits outside a damaged warehouse Monday in New Orleans's Ninth Ward. (AP photo)

aid could be taking on more debt to rebuild.

The draft faces scrutiny from local officials, state lawmakers and the affected residents; and it depends in large part on federal dollars awaiting congressional approval.

The plan would provide money to repair or rebuild damaged homes and to relocate people who want to build elsewhere in Louisiana. For those who don't want to relocate or rebuild in Louisiana, the plan would buy them out at 60 percent of the pre-storm home value.

While the program would not dictate what neighborhoods could be rebuilt, it would require that people who receive housing assistance rebuild to new federal standards that haven't been finalized.

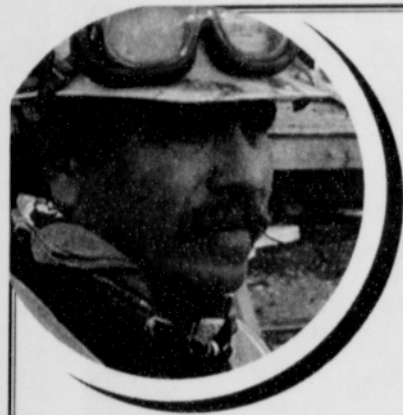
Some residents of flooded

neighborhoods like the Lower Ninth Ward have worried that the new federal standards would require the elevation of homes and other storm-protective measures would price them out of rebuilding.

Also, under Blanco's proposal, anyone rebuilding in the flood plain would have to carry flood insurance - another measure that could price out some low-income homeowners.

An estimated 128,000 owner-occupied homes had major damage by the storms and 210,000 more received minor damage, according to Blanco's Louisiana Recovery Authority.

The program would use a mix of direct grants and home loans, in some cases with no interest and no payments due until the homes are sold or transferred to new owners.



ODOT WORKS TO BUILD DIVERSE, TRAINED WORKFORCE

Oregon will soon reach record levels of highway construction. Without an immediate effort to identify, recruit and train a new, more diverse workforce, there simply won't be enough workers to get the job done.

Through the Oregon Department of Transportation's Workforce Development Plan, five regional alliances consisting of state and local partners will build on existing programs and resources to create a qualified labor pool for the growing number of highway construction jobs.

The Portland area alliance formed in September 2005. The second alliance launches this month in eastern Oregon. A third alliance comes online this spring in southern Oregon.

To learn more, visit ODOT's web site at http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OTIA/bridge_delivery.shtml.

ODOT IS INVESTING IN OREGON'S FUTURE



Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., campaigns for Rep. Harold Ford, D-Tenn., Monday on the University of Tennessee campus. Ford is running for the senate seat held by Republican Sen. Bill Frist. (AP photo)

Obama Impressive in First Year

Lawmaker has Midas touch

(AP)—Barack Obama is showing a Midas touch in his first year in Congress. He's already a best-selling author, a Grammy Award winner and an important fundraiser for fellow Democrats.

Altogether, the freshman senator from Illinois has helped raise \$6.5 million for his political action committee and other Democratic candidates, party committees and state parties from New Jersey to Virginia to Florida.

He brought in about \$800,000 with an e-mail message sent out on MoveOn.org on behalf of Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., who at age 88 is seeking a ninth term in office.

"He said some nice things about me," Byrd recalled. "Anywhere he comes in West Virginia we will give the man a great reception. He's a wonderful man."

Some of Obama's fundraising activities are part of his job as a vice chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

"These are trips not initiated by me; these are trips that other people think will be helpful," Obama said, noting he has family and political obligations in Illinois. "For every invitation I've accepted, I've turned down 100."

"I've been incredibly blessed," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "My attitude is

as long as I work hard, as long as I operate honestly, with integrity, the worst that can happen to me is that I can lose an election."

Being the Senate's lone black member and only the fifth black senator in history, Obama has prompted many fellow Democrats and others to wonder if he will become the nation's first black president, or vice president.

"The party needs him and, for all I know, the nation needs him," said George Washington University political analyst Stephen Hess. "There hasn't been an African-American Democrat who has had an appeal broadly beyond his ethnic group."

Senate Democrats and Republicans alike, who often use "gentleman," and "humble," and "hard working" to describe Obama, the 44-year-old married father of two daughters, say he is destined for bigger roles in the years ahead.

"I think people look at him and think he's clearly, clearly going to continue to grow in influence in the Senate and in national politics," said Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio.

"I've been here 31 years and seen a small handful of people that have made as much an impression as he has and he has done it by working hard," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.

The City of Portland, Multnomah County and Metro Honor Black History Month



"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members, a heart of grace and a soul generated by love." Coretta Scott King

The City of Portland, Multnomah County and Metro dedicate Black History Month 2006 to the memory of Coretta Scott King.

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Mobs in Nigeria Kill 24

(AP)—Christian and Muslim mobs rampaged through two Nigerian cities Tuesday, killing at least 24 people in violence that followed deadly protests against caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad over the weekend.

In the mainly Muslim northern city of Bauchi, violent protests by Muslims targeting Christians claimed the lives of 18 people, the Nigerian Red Cross said. In the predominantly southern Christian city of Onitsha, residents and witnesses said at least six Muslims were beaten to death by Christian mobs which also burned two

mosques there.

Tuesday's violence brought to 49 the total number of people killed in sectarian violence in Nigeria since Saturday, when protests over controversial cartoons published in Europe of the Prophet Muhammad turned violent in the northern Muslim city of Maiduguri for the first time, killing at least 18 people, police said.

Similar protests broke out in Bauchi city soon afterward, leaving seven dead Monday and another 18 dead Tuesday, Adamu Abubakar, secretary of the Red Cross in Bauchi, told reporters.