

New York, NY - In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) President Phyllis Snyder issued the following statement:

"We have watched with alarm the tragedy that continues to unfold in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast as a result of Katrina. Our hearts go out to all of the people who have suffered from this disastrous hurricane -- those who have lost loved ones, homes, livelihoods, and their communities.

"We applaud the efforts of the individuals who have worked day and night to rescue and provide relief to those victimized by Katrina. So, too, we salute the countless volunteers, many of whom are from NCJW, working to assist evacuees who have relocated to their communities.

"This is a tragedy compounded by the grave mistakes made by the very people and institutions charged with keeping us safe. We urge the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry with adequate budget authority and subpoena power to investigate this catastrophe. It is important that this effort rise above partisan politics in order to determine exactly what went wrong and to make recommendations for the future.

"Recovering from Katrina will necessitate measures that go well beyond the immediate cleanup and rebuilding tasks. This disaster has exposed the fault lines of race and poverty in our society that we all knew existed but which have been ignored, especially in recent years.

"NCJW calls upon our leaders and lawmakers to realign their priorities, and we pledge to redouble our efforts to ensure that this happens. We must prioritize funding to address human needs over tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthy and drain vital budgetary resources. We must act to address the vestiges of racism that linger in our society. And we must act to ensure that the communities that rise from the rubble embody a new vision of equality and social justice."

NCJW is a volunteer organization, inspired by Jewish values, that works to improve the quality of life for women, children, and families and to ensure individual rights and freedoms for all through its network of 90,000 members, supporters, and volunteers nationwide.

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