



**LANDRIEU, ALEXANDER UNVEIL CHILDREN IN DISASTERS BILL**  
*Bill focuses on needs of children before, during and after a disaster.*

WASHINGTON – United States Senators Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., today held a press conference to unveil new legislation to address the unique needs of children before, during, and after a disaster. The Child Safety, Care and Education Continuity Act is the culmination of months of work, including two hearings held by Sen. Landrieu, and incorporates recommendations made by a National Commission on Children and Disasters (NCDD) report released in October.

“Kids are the focal point of a family, and in the aftermath of a disaster, the first concern of any parent is getting their children as close to their normal life as possible,” Landrieu said. “The most important aspect of returning children to their regular routine is getting them back into school or child care. Not only does that help children in the aftermath of a disaster, it also allows parents to focus on returning to work and beginning to rebuild.”

“Congress reacted in record time to Katrina—but not fast enough for the tens of thousands of children displaced by the storm to return to school quickly, including the 4,100 children who temporarily relocated to Tennessee,” Alexander said. “This bill is an excellent textbook example of Congress learning from history and getting ahead of the curve to help communities restart and children return to life as usual after the next major disaster.” Sen. Alexander is Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension’s Subcommittee on Children and Families.

“While catastrophes have a profound effect on everyone in the disaster zone, they’re particularly traumatic for children” said Mark Shriver, Chairperson of the National Commission of Children and Disasters. “We applaud Senator Landrieu and Senator Alexander for their leadership and urge Congress to enact the common sense solutions in this bill to protect the most vulnerable Americans following a disaster.”

LSU’s Department of Psychiatry screened 12,000 children in schools during the 2005-06 school years. Their research found that 18% of the students had a family member who was killed in the hurricane, 49% of them met the threshold for a mental health referral.

The Children’s Health Fund found that 28% of displaced children in Louisiana are still suffering from depression or anxiety and 33% still exhibit behavioral problems. Save the Children found that only seven states require licensed child care providers to have basic written emergency plans in place addressing evacuation, reunification and accommodating children with special needs.

In November 2005, Congress incorporated aid to the Gulf Coast into the Deficit Reduction Act, which was signed into law on February 8, 2006 – almost six months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The programs sunset after one year, though his legislation introduced today will authorize some of those expired programs, as well as several new measures, to ensure that our nation has a framework in place to help children and families regain some normalcy in the event of a future catastrophic disaster.

The bill also:

- Provides tuition reimbursements to elementary and secondary schools that take in displaced students.
- Eases financial aid regulations on students attending Institutions of Higher Education that are unable to operate after a disaster.
- Provides mental health counseling for pre-K students through Head Start Agencies.
- Requires that HHS and States work together to develop Disaster Guidance for Medicaid and Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) providers to ensure that displaced children have access to medical care.
- Increases access to child care services for disaster-affected families through the Child Care and Development Block Grant program.
- Requires child care centers that receive federal funding through that program to develop emergency plans for evacuation, reunification, special needs, and temporary operating standards.

For more information about the bill, visit:

[http://landrieu.senate.gov/media/Children\\_In\\_Disasters\\_Backgrounder.pdf](http://landrieu.senate.gov/media/Children_In_Disasters_Backgrounder.pdf)