

## **Statement of William H. Hines**

Testimony before the Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Oversight Hearing on Hurricane Katrina and  
Response and Recovery Efforts

November 2, 2005

### **Introduction**

My name is William H. Hines, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the law firm of Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrere and Denegre, L.L.P., and immediate past Chairman and continuing member of the board of Greater New Orleans, Inc., a public/private partnership that spearheads economic development initiatives for the ten-parish Greater New Orleans region. Additionally, at the request of Mayor Ray Nagin, I serve as the Co-Chairman of the Economic Development Committee for Mayor's Bring New Orleans Back Commission. I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss response and recovery efforts affecting the future of New Orleans.

It cannot be stated often enough. Hurricane Katrina was like no other hurricane before it – the cataclysmic storm caused unprecedented destruction and long-term interruption to governmental services and economic activity. Never in the history of this Nation has a three-state area been hit so hard nor has an entire major U.S. metropolitan city been evacuated for weeks on end.

And while Katrina occurred over two months ago and seems to be largely fading from the front pages of our Nation's newspapers, the lives of the citizens of the greater New Orleans area have not returned to "normal". Many businesses in the region are generating little or no revenue, and are struggling to meet payroll, rent and vendor payment obligations. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan approvals are moving at a snail's pace. As of early October in Louisiana alone, more than 230,000 unemployment claims had been filed...16 times the normal volume. One additional but illustrative example of how life in the New Orleans region has not returned to normal concerns the U.S. Postal Service. Most regional businesses are still missing over a month of their mail. Without receipt of payment checks, vouchers, bills and other important and time-sensitive business documents, commerce within the region is significantly hampered. This backlog must be eliminated, and it represents but one area where federal assistance can help the regional business community.

On behalf of the citizens of New Orleans and the regional business community, I wish to highlight the regional economic activity that must be restored in the wake of Katrina.

