

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2005
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

A TIME FOR A SPECIAL LEADER!

It doesn't happen often. Maybe once or twice in a century. But every now and then, the times call out for a special leader. Someone with exceptional abilities to pull diverse groups together, forge solutions to extremely difficult problems, and be a leader that can take charge, and motivate and focus on the crisis at hand. Rudy Giuliani was called on after 9/11. It was President Truman in the latter part of World War II. And if ever there was a comparable time for such an important role to be played, the time is now.

One of the criticisms being levied at the rescue efforts on the Gulf Coast is the breakdown in communication and coordination. There are organizational efforts of massive proportions being undertaken by local officials, state agencies and a number of federal agencies. Unfortunately, it has become evident to the rest of the country and the world that there has been a serious lack of communication among those who are trying to offer help. The left hand often does not know what the right hand is doing, and there has been blistering criticism from those affected as well as observers nationwide.

One man should be asked to step up to the plate. He is on a first name basis with almost every key leader involved in the relief effort, from the President on down to local city councilmen. He has instant access to every member of Congress. And he stands today as the most recognized, most respected and most popular figure in recent Louisiana political history.

The President should pick up the phone and call this individual. Tell him his country needs him more than ever, and that he stands alone in his ability to pull this massive relief effort together. That call should be made to former Louisiana Senator John Breaux.

And what a mammoth job to undertake. Breaux would be jumping into the middle of a real hornet's nest. But someone needs to do it and do it now. This is so much to do.

First off, get a coordinated effort in place. I went to the Office of Homeland Security Friday night. The second guessing and criticism was rampant. Local officials complaining about a lack of focus from the state. State officials complaining about the slow response from FEMA. FEMA officials I had worked with in previous storm crises complaining about how they now, for the first time, have to get approval for everything they do from the Office of Homeland Security.

News reporters were there shaking their heads in dismay over the slow reaction by all concerned. NBC's Brian Williams lamented over why the response to help was so slow. Several national news reporters, one from the New York Times, wondered why we could get large military teams to Iraq in 24 hours, yet four days had gone by with still only a minor federal presence.

John Breaux is capable of pulling all these factions together and demanding an immediate partnership of cooperation. He can, and I believe would, put a stop to the turf wars, set out a priority list and have the President's backing as well as the Governors involved to swiftly develop a master plan for immediate implementation. And for those who fail to toe the line and cooperate, move them to the side and eliminate them from the effort.

The Congress this week appropriated \$10 billion for the relief effort. That figure, just like in Iraq, will prove to be far to low. Breaux can plead the case for substantially more money that is needed, and needed right away. He would have the President's ear in this effort, more so than just about any other person that might fill such a job.

So Governor Blanco, call the President and urge John Breaux's selection. And Mr., President, you can make a major contribution to dramatically pick up the speed of this massive relief effort by calling on Sen. Breaux. If the President asks, John Breaux will accept this call of duty. And the whole country, not just the Gulf Coast, will benefit.

All of us here in this zone of a terrible catastrophe need this help. Go ahead, Mr. President. Make this call.

"Leadership is a matter of having people look at you and gain confidence, seeing how you react. If you're in control, they're in control."

--Tom Landry

Peace and Justice.

Jim Brown