



**One Hundred Ninth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515**

November 1, 2005

The Honorable Tom Davis  
Chairman  
Select Committee on Hurricane Katrina Preparation and Response  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Davis:

As I understand it, the Select Committee is turning its attention to contracting irregularities and abuses that emerged in the preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina. I do not believe that the Select Committee is taking the time necessary to properly investigate waste, fraud and abuse in the procurement activities related to Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, the Select Committee, which is not an independent commission, does not have the jurisdiction or the credibility it needs to properly do the job. With all due respect, I do not believe that delegating the enormous responsibility of investigating Katrina preparation and response is wise or proper.

My opposition to the creation of this committee is well-known. I strongly believe that the failures and shortcomings in the federal response to Hurricane Katrina deserve a full, complete investigation by an independent commission that is immune from political influence and partisanship. In the absence of an independent committee, I believe that the House congressional committees including Homeland Security, which has extensive expertise and knowledge of the Department on Homeland Security's activities, are best-suited to conduct the inquiry.

The scope of the Select Committee's inquiry into Katrina-related contracting activities is far too narrow. According to discussions between my staff and the Select Committee's Parliamentarian, the Committee intends to hold a one-day hearing on the subject and to limit its inquiry to the ten days before and the ten days after Katrina made landfall on August 29, 2005. This level of inquiry will not satisfy the widely reported and rampant contractor abuses that surround the Katrina response and recovery effort. My own staff has spent over a month reviewing procurement related violations.

It will take a steady, focused congressional inquiry to ensure that waste, fraud and abuse do not continue as the Department obligates and disburses funds appropriated under the \$62 billion Katrina relief package. The American people deserve better. The successful recovery of Gulf Coast residents will depend on the competence of this effort. Together with my colleagues on the Homeland Security Committee, I am working to ensure that the Katrina procurement abuses receive the steady, focused oversight they deserve and are not simply relegated to a footnote in the “Michael Brown-Michael Chertoff-DHS-FEMA failure story.”

I look forward to working with you in your capacity as Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, to use the lessons learned from the Katrina-related procurement experience to ensure that such abuses cannot occur in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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Bennie G. Thompson  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Homeland Security