

# THE Center for Education Reform



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## *Statement by Jeanne Allen* *President, The Center for Education Reform*

### **REGARDING PRESIDENT BUSH'S REMARKS ON HURRICANE KATRINA RECOVERY EFFORTS**

**(Washington, D.C.)** – "In an effort to respond to growing criticism that the Administration is not addressing the wide variety of needs of families displaced by Hurricane Katrina, the President announced that the Federal government is providing states with \$60 billion in relief funds.

*According to the White House: "The President is proposing to provide funding "to school districts enrolling significant numbers of displaced children. To ensure that displaced families have maximum flexibility to meet the education needs of their children, the President's proposal would provide compensation to displaced families for enrollment in private, including parochial, schools."*

"He is right to act to provide choices to parents in need in this troubling time, and we applaud this leadership. However, thousands of children find themselves through no fault of their own in places where public schools are low-performing and overcrowded. While private schools are often oversubscribed, they have responded to the needs of Katrina's children by offering free tuition and support to literally thousands of students in dozens of states. However that is just a start, and more action is required.

"This Administration needs to be more aggressive in ensuring that parents receive critical emergency funds for education as well as the federal government's intervention into state laws that are limiting families to conventional public schools. The president needs to demand that states with charter school laws, like Louisiana, immediately waive enrollment limitations facing charters so that they too can begin to take in the children who have been displaced.

"Charter schools have a unique capability -- they need not be bogged down by bureaucracy and can work swiftly. Within days of this tragedy a few hundred charter schools identified more than 5,000 available seats and were willing to expand to accommodate kids in need. Some private sector education members were even exploring putting online learning into shelters, because many families are concerned about being separated from their children. Many parents are also concerned about the quality of their options, and some evacuees' shelters are not near a school.

(more)



"The charter community simply is asking for additional consideration of waivers for charter schools to be able to access public charter grant funds, because they will not necessarily be reimbursed by per pupil dollars in educating the children they have accepted into their schools from other districts and states.

"Taking into account all educational opportunities currently available, and harnessing the energy and commitment of both the private and public sectors is critical to serving families and children to the best of our collective abilities. Anything short of a comprehensive response is window dressing. We look forward to the immediate consideration of this and other proposals on the table and the Administration's aggressive effort to get it passed.

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*Jeanne Allen is President of the Center for Education Reform (CER), which creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms. For more information, contact CER at (202) 822-9000 or visit [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com).*