

Victims

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as he was making his way to New Orleans from a visit to Mississippi to survey the damage to the Gulf region.

They pointed out that many of Katrina's victims were sequestered in unsavory conditions at Louisiana's Superdome and now in the Astrodome in Houston. In voices trembling with outrage, they urged state, local, and private entities to merge efforts to give food, clothing, shelter, and the restoration of a sense of hope. Although Cummings acknowledged that Congress would appropriate \$10.5 billion in emergency aid to FEMA, he said he was not pleased with its efforts so far in aiding victims.

"I disagree with the president doing all that he can as fast as he can," he said. "To be very frank with you, I for one have not been very impressed with FEMA to date."

In a published report, FEMA head Michael Brown said he believed many victims "bear some responsibility for their fates," because they did not respond to pre-hurricane warnings to evacuate. But controversy surrounds the agency's commu-

nication protocol with local emergency preparedness response providers. Brown said he did not know "victims were told to go to the [New Orleans] convention center," so the agency initially did not know where to direct aid.

Amid charges of ineptitude, some in the Black community have called for Brown's resignation. But CBC members were determined to focus on the immediate needs of those most affected by the catastrophic storm. "I'm not calling for the resignation of the head of FEMA... I'm calling for America to take care of Americans regardless of their color... It ain't about name calling right now; it's about action," said Stephanie Tubbs-Jones (D-Ohio).

Action for victim aid was not solely the charge of the federal government, but anyone who could help, said the speakers.

"We all have to do whatever we can," said civil rights icon Dorothy Height.

"This is the time for those with wealth and resources to step up to the plate and demonstrate that compassion. This is the time to save human lives. People are dying

because they have no water. Companies that bottle water now have the power to save lives. Infants are dying because there is no baby formula to keep them alive. Companies that make this formula must be on the front lines. Food companies could work with the national guard to coordinate the distribution of food to the victims," said Cummings. "Private contractors that have helicopters and boats and buses at their disposal could put those tools to work in the service of their country. It has been reported that oil producers and home improvement stores may actually benefit in the long run from Hurricane Katrina. These are industries that should be the first to offer support," he said.

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick said jurisdictions could look to Detroit as a model to structure their aid efforts for victims. Kilpatrick has opened the city up to thousands of hurricane victims.

Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) said he was "appalled" with the news media's shift in coverage of the devastation that the hurricane has wreaked on its victims "to

what people do in desperate circumstances," like looting and stealing.

"The people are not refugees; they are American citizens. They pay taxes; they raise their families; they help America grow, and I wish the media would call them American citizens," said

Fraud

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them down all the time." At this "critical time" consumers must be "extra cautious and take an extra step," Jarman said.

She instructs the community — and all who are sending money to any charity, anywhere — to "use common sense" to avoid becoming a victim of fraud.

Jarman recommends precautions:

"You want to give to an organization you know something about," she advises. Her office is not endorsing any entity, but refers to reputable organizations like the Red Cross and other well-known licensed, well-established groups because "they have a history." If you are not sure or cannot verify who the group or company is, don't donate. Wait and get more information if you have an interest in them. Verify before rushing into action only to become a victim.

Regarding telemarketers, Jarman has strict guidelines: "First of all, get on the DNC list." That is the national Do Not Call registry that consumers can list their phone number(s) with to help prevent and eliminate calls from telemarketing companies that can be penalized for non-compliance.

"You don't ever want to give out any per-

CBC member Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-Mich.).

"We are under an obligation as Americans to move these people out of the region as quickly as possible. Malaria, tuberculosis and other issues of human illness and disease are certainly sure to follow. The Congress of the

United States must step forward," said Jackson. "And the president of the United States who is coming off of a historic record of vacations must go to work now and rebuild America."

Kenneth Mallory and Valencia Mohammed write for Afro Newspapers.

sonal information" whether you are on the DNC list or not and get calls soliciting for money or anything.

The scammers are very prevalent on the Internet, Jarman said. She recommends extreme caution be used or avoidance to eliminate all risk. For online donors, Jarman urges charitable consumers go directly to the site of the organization(s) of their choice; again, using the Red Cross example, the official national site is www.redcross.org. Jarman said be very wary when online. She said, "Internet fraud is in the top five."

Be careful online, but better yet, mail the check directly to the qualified organization's known address is Jarman's advice. And don't give money or a check to anyone on the streets, Jarman advises as a common sense precaution. No matter how you choose to give, don't get taken. Be mindful of the Commissioner's permanent warning: "Check it out before you write the check."

For information on how to get listed on the Do Not Call registry or other consumer protection tips, contact the Nevada Consumer Affairs Division at (702) 486-7355 or send e-mail to www.ncad@fyiconsumer.org or visit the website at www.fyiconsumer.org.

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