

GIVE THE MONEY WITHOUT THE STRINGS

Senators Edward Kennedy, Lamar Alexander, Christopher Dodd, and Mike Enzi introduced a hurricane-relief bill in the Senate that was a mixed blessing.

The bill would allow any school (be it public or private, secular or religious) willing to host students displaced by Hurricane Katrina to receive \$6,000 in aid for each student taken in. But it also contained language that was troubling: it said monies could not go for the purpose of religious instruction.

The Archdiocese of New Orleans announced that it has 14 Catholic schools able to accept a total of 3,000 additional students. The archdiocese has asked the state to provide a mere \$2,500 per child to cover costs. Louisiana's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has agreed to consider the proposal.

We found it encouraging to see that Senators Kennedy, Alexander, Dodd and Enzi are more concerned with finding schools for the kids displaced by Katrina than they are in harping on partisan squabbles over vouchers. And we applaud their efforts to get these kids behind school desks, and their willingness to consider the well-being of children over the rabid protests of church-state separationists who would rather see scores of uneducated kids than a single tax dollar go toward a religious institution.

But we are bewildered by the stricture that forbids spending money on religious education. What exactly do these senators think religious schools do? They need to be told that hurricanes don't discriminate, and neither should the government when it comes to providing relief for those who

have suffered.

It is much easier to applaud the extensive efforts of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Quickly finding room for 3,000 children is laudable enough, but the low cost of only \$2,500 a head is nothing short of remarkable. Indeed, it speaks to the dedication and commitment of the various teachers and administrators who devote so much effort to making parochial schools such a benefit to this country.