

# PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS DESERVE FEMA FUNDS

The decision by the Bush administration to help rebuild those areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina includes awarding public monies to parochial schools and other religious institutions (exclusive of houses of worship). We commended the administration in a statement released to the media on October 19:

“On both moral and legal grounds, the Bush administration made the right decision to provide federal funds to parochial schools in those areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Morally, it makes sense to help all institutions affected by a natural disaster, but constitutionally it could prove to be problematic to include houses of worship.

“Regarding this last point, granting emergency relief even to churches could be easily justified: President Thomas Jefferson provided \$300 in federal funds for the purpose of building a Catholic church for the Kaskaskia Indians.

“More recently, the U.S. Naval Academy received \$1.8 million in federal funds to build a Jewish Center, and in the facility there is a synagogue. Though Commander Rod Gibbons, Director of Public Affairs at the academy, called our office to say that none of the federal funds were spent on the synagogue, he has not replied to a letter I sent to him three weeks ago demanding evidence for his position. Moreover, he cannot explain why a huge Star of David has been erected on public property (it is in the atrium of the building—not in the synagogue).

“The Seattle Hebrew Academy received more than a half-million dollars in a federal grant in 2002 to rebuild after being hit by an earthquake. That was the right decision then, and it is

the right decision now for the government to help rebuild parochial schools in New Orleans.”

Unfortunately, thanks to Senator Edward Kennedy, this proposal was defeated.