

**AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC.**

<http://www.atheists.org>

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For more information, please contact:

Ellen Johnson, President (973) 625-6900

Dave Silverman, Communications Director (732) 648-9333

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 3, 2005**

**AMERICA'S ATHEISTS  
CONTRIBUTING TO KATRINA AID EFFORT  
"Contrary to some, charity and mutual aid are not the  
monopoly of religious organizations"**

While some government officials are calling for prayer and trying to focus public attention on the work done by some religious groups, America's diverse community of nonbelievers -- Atheists, Freethinkers, Humanists and others -- are joining the effort to support relief operations in New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf Coast.

AMERICAN ATHEISTS is one such organization, and has called upon the country's Atheists to generously donate to emergency efforts. The organization is using its web site at <http://www.atheists.org> to list charitable groups that do not include religious preaching and proselytizing in their relief efforts.

"We're getting reports of how some religion-based 'aid' groups are trying to fly evangelists into the stricken areas and how U.S. Army Chaplains are carrying Bibles -- not food or water -- to "comfort" people at the New Orleans Superdome," said Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists. "People need material aid, medical care and economic support -- not prayers and preaching."

Johnson also said that Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco and President George Bush "should not be violating the Constitution by telling people to pray for the victims of Hurricane Katrina."

"It's unconstitutional for government officials to be promoting religion; and besides, judging from the speed of some relief efforts, officials should be busy working instead of preaching."

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists, compared Hurricane Katrina to January's Asian tsunami which claimed thousands of lives. "It appears that despite all of the outbursts of public religiosity and prayer, 'God' was once again asleep at the wheel."

"Only human beings can deal with the calamities of the natural world," said Silverman. "God doesn't seem to be much help when it comes to rushing food, water, or antibiotics when people are suffering."

Ms. Johnson said that her group is spreading the word to encourage Atheists to contribute money to relief organizations that do not proselytize as part of their rescue efforts.

American Atheists is a nationwide movement which defends the civil rights of nonbelievers, works for the separation of church and state, and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.

American Atheists, Inc. P. O. Box 5733 Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733

Tel: (908) 276-7300 Fax: (973) 625-6901

