

P R E S S R E L E A S E

For Immediate Release

February 24, 2006

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KATRINA ‘LESSONS LEARNED’ REPORT IGNORES NON-CITIZENS

WASHINGTON, DC – The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. found the White House’s report, “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned” thorough, but incomplete. It failed to address the problem of the government’s mishandling of non-citizens in disaster areas.

CLINIC’s staff and affiliate member agencies working directly in the Gulf Coast encountered an underground population afraid to cooperate with the government’s disaster relief. Some non-citizen victims who came forward following hurricane Katrina faced arrest and removal proceedings.

Public health and safety efforts require full cooperation from everyone in the afflicted area. Without a clear policy that they will not be deported, undocumented immigrants and their families will not come forward during humanitarian relief and rebuilding efforts.

In a letter to the Department of Homeland Security, the Chairmen of CLINIC and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Migration urged it to “adopt a policy to provide assistance to all non-citizens and to suspend immigration enforcement measures in the wake of natural or man-made disasters.”

According to CLINIC’s Executive Director, Don Kerwin, “effectively denying persons access to the institutions and programs central to their survival offends basic humanitarian principles.” He added, “it is unfortunate this important report omitted the need to separate disaster relief from immigration enforcement.”

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation’s largest network of charitable immigration services with 156 affiliates in 260 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies. www.cliniclegal.org

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