

# Still hard times in the Big Easy?

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Money, money everywhere and not one cent fit for New Orleans. The recently passed \$787 billion porkulus bill contains Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's, D-Nev., pet \$8 billion earmark to build a high-speed train linking Disneyland to Las Vegas. And Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., topped off the lard bucket ironically misnamed as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 with tens of millions of dollars dedicated to restoring the habitat of the salt marsh harvest mouse, a treasured mascot of San Francisco's environmental extremists. Billions are destined for ACORN, the voter-fraud wing of the Democratic Party. But, there is not a single dime designated for rebuilding New Orleans.

Now, we all know the role that Katrina relief has played in the last two elections. Republicans were condemned as racists for not spending enough money to rebuild New Orleans. And the election has not stilled the drumbeat. Here is a snarky little entry addressing the issue on the president's Web site, [whitehouse.gov/agenda/additional/](http://whitehouse.gov/agenda/additional/):

"President Obama will keep the broken promises to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. He and Vice President Biden will take steps to ensure that the federal government will never again allow such catastrophic failures in emergency planning and response to occur.

"Then-Sen. Obama introduced legislation requiring disaster planners to take into account the specific needs of low-income hurricane victims. Obama visited thousands of hurricane survivors in the Houston Convention Center and later took three more trips to the region. He worked with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to introduce legislation to address the immediate income, employment, business, and housing needs of Gulf Coast communities.

"President Barack Obama will partner with the people of the Gulf Coast to rebuild now, stronger than ever."

But in the race to put together a bill that contained all of their most ambitious dreams, New Orleans fell off the Democrats' radar screen. A cynic might conclude that, now that Democrats own the presidency and large majorities in both houses of Congress, Katrina victims' usefulness as political props has been exhausted. Or I suppose we could say that Obama doesn't care about black people.

But Obama does have a lot of enablers coming to his defense. Louisiana's Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu said, "I'm not saying there won't be a need in the future, but right now the focus is not on more money, it's on using what we have."

So does that mean that there actually was enough money after all? According to Landrieu, George Bush sent New Orleans so much money that they're still trying to figure out how they're going to spend it all. That somehow contradicts what I had been hearing for the last 3 1/2 years. As recently as last year, during the presidential campaign, Democrats accused Bush of putting the Iraq war ahead of U.S. citizens when he objected to a Democratic stunt of attaching Katrina relief funding to a supplemental war appropriation.

From my distant perspective, it seemed to me that the more than \$175 billion that Bush provided New Orleans since Katrina struck in 2005 should have been enough to build a freshly minted New Orleans from the ground up and cover it with a dome to protect it from future storms. But that's not what the Democrats and the media have preached over the past few years.

According to Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the people in New Orleans have been spoiled over the last few years: "I think people looked at how generous Congress has been in the past." And if the states hit by Katrina want more money, they "have to demonstrate that they can be good custodians of the money."

So suddenly the recipients of the federal largess have to demonstrate that they can responsibly digest the banquet of treasure that the federal government has already showered upon them before they can expect more. Wow, just imagine what would have happened to George Bush if he had said something so racist and insensitive.

But don't worry people of New Orleans. Even though your usefulness has expired, I doubt that you've been entirely forgotten. You should feel confident that somebody will manage to insert an earmark into a spending bill directing a congressional intern to send you a thank-you card for a job well done. You've been great victims.

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