

Statement of Senator Susan M. Collins

In Support of Red Cross Month

February 27, 2008

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**Mr. President. I rise to speak on the Red Cross and its campaign to encourage citizen preparedness for disasters.**

**For 65 years, since the first proclamation by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Presidents of the United States have designated March as Red Cross Month.**

**I am proud to support this year's proclamation in recognizing this great organization, whose activities include life-saving courses, blood drives, sheltering families displaced by fire or flood, and responding to major disasters. This January, for**

**example, Red Cross work in my home state of Maine included an urgent blood drive amid ice and snow that had reduced some hospitals' blood supply to a single day. Other Maine Red Cross workers were taking care of a seven-member family in the town of Skowhegan who had lost their home and possessions in a fire.**

**I know the good works of the Red Cross both as a Maine resident and as a Senator. As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, I have worked closely with emergency management agencies and nonprofit organizations for years. I know the Red Cross has not only saved many lives and comforted millions, but has taken steps to improve its structure and capabilities for disaster response.**

**The record of recent years for terrorism, fires, earthquakes, floods, and other disasters underscores the need for preparedness – not only at all levels of government, but among individual citizens and families.**

**I therefore commend the Red Cross for focusing their public-communication efforts this year on the theme of “Be Red Cross Ready.” It is a well-chosen theme: Red Cross survey work finds that up to 60 percent of Americans are entirely unprepared for disaster. They have no emergency supplies, no first-aid or CPR training, no rendezvous or communication plans, or other precautions.**

**The catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina reminded us that government and other first responders, no matter how efficient and heroic,**

**cannot appear instantly at every point affected by a disaster. Every citizen should be prepared to serve as a first responder for family and neighbors if official or volunteer responders cannot offer immediate assistance.**

**Encouraging individual responsibility and preparedness to augment government and private-organization efforts can reinforce our National Response Framework to provide truly comprehensive and all-hazards protection.**

**For promoting readiness, and for all its good works, the American Red Cross deserves the thanks of all Americans and the recognition of Red Cross Month.**

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