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## Catholic Charities president urges federal measures to help Gulf relief

by Casey McCorry

NCR Today

Since the BP oil spill Catholic Charities agencies have provided services to more than 20,000 individuals and more than 7,000 families in the Gulf but their president, Father Larry Snyder, is fearful about the future. With too few resources, underwhelming donations, and a "growing vulnerable population" Snyder says there is a dire need to access greater funding, and he urges federal involvement. Snyder met with Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., subcommittee chairman July 20 to discuss how lack of funds has severely impacted Catholic Charities' work. Lewis asked,

"Are you turning families away?" Snyder replied, "We are turning people away. Our reserves are not meeting the needs at this time."

Snyder attributes their inability to raise funds from the American public to a blame game.

"Most of the American public believes BP is ultimately responsible for setting things right after the spill- People have kind of exonerated themselves from any need to take part in relief."

In addition to a plea for more funding Snyder offered numerous constructive steps for the federal government to take including: implementing a national disaster declaration for the area, developing a regional strategy for long-term recovery and creating a new disaster unemployment assistance program, among other measures. The meeting provoked great discussion and a hopeful outlook.

"Our neighbors on the Gulf Coast need to know that we don't just see the television images of the spewing oil well, or the oil-soaked birds and beaches, but that we see the human faces of this tragedy." Lewis said.

?They need to know that we hear their pleas, and we want to help.?

We can only pray that this is soon proven true.

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