

Churches From Around the U.S. Come to New Orleans United to Rebuild Better New Orleans

Brooke Erickson

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TREME -- Churches from around the country are coming together here.

They want action from our political leaders to do more to help the recovery effort. ACT, or All Congregations Together, is asking the city, state and federal government to rebuild a better New Orleans and Gulf Coast.

U-S Senator Mary Landrieu was on hand.

She says she's fighting hard for that.

And she called on out-of state members to press their leaders for continued help. Hundreds of parishioners gathered inside Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

They were members from different states, faiths and races.

But they stood together on rebuilding a better, stronger New Orleans.

Ben Franklin High School senior Lucas Gipson told various city council members and Senator Landrieu he held them accountable for the comeback of this city. "I can't stand by and not be a part of this process. I want to make a difference, but I need your help. This is our chance to make things better than they were in August," said Gipson.

People told their unique but sad stories. "We were in Chicago with all our family, all our loved ones. They said, 'don't go back there, you're going to die there.' I said, 'look, my husband told me if we don't go back there, he will die here.'"

All jokes aside, the El-Amin's say their Treme home was under 20 feet of water.

At one point they didn't want to come back.

But now they are.

They came today to give a pep talk to those who've lost hope. "There are many groups out there working for you to help you. If you need your home needs to be rebuilt it," said Mutawally El-Amin.

If the El-Amin's are trying for hope they have their work cut out for them..

Thousands of displaced families are still waiting on Congress to approve \$4.2 billion that would go toward the housing stock.

This week Governor Kathleen Blanco proposed \$1.7 billion for affordable housing.

Those monies, part of the Congress package, could go toward creating mixed-income housing and capping rent so people can afford a place to live.

Senator Landrieu says she's not happy with the pace of progress, but she says things are moving along. "There's been too much time passed too much pain and suffering, but still I see a lot of hope," said Senator Landrieu.

As Landrieu listened to the frustrated people talk, she told them she was on the same page as them.

She fears the city may not be ready come June first, but, she says, she and her colleagues are fighting hard. "We're furiously at work trying to get every dollar we can thru whatever source we can to rebuild as many levees, build new levees build them higher, build them stronger, get better flood gates, better pumping systems," said Senator Landrieu. Senator Landrieu has had a tough time in Washington getting some of her colleagues to come down here to tour the devastation.

She took the opportunity today to tell those out of state ministers to go home and get their lawmakers on board.

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