

### **TSUNAMI AID: AMERICA'S COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE**

This week the flags in front of the Missouri Capitol and around our state hang solemnly at half-staff under the Governor's order as Missourians join with millions around the world in mourning the human tragedy unfolding in the wake of the deadly tsunami in the Indian Ocean. I would like to postpone my normal discussion of political matters and offer a few thoughts.

As I reflect on this tragedy I again realize how we in this nation are extremely blessed. I do not mean to make light of the fact that poverty exists in the United States but except for rare circumstances what is called poverty here would hardly qualify for the name by developing world standards. In the recent tsunami untold thousands of already impoverished people have been left utterly destitute. Their homes, their possessions, their means of earning a living and in far too many cases their children and other loved ones were swept away almost without warning.

The differences between our two worlds could not be more stark. When four massive hurricanes slammed into Florida in recent months the infrastructure in our nation was in place to move in supplies and medical teams. State and federal agencies and charities responded immediately to prevent widespread loss of life and to provide food, potable water and shelter. Unfortunately, many of the Asian nations affected by this tsunami do not have this advanced infrastructure nor do they have the capacity to respond to a disaster of this magnitude. Furthermore, while most Floridians can expect their insurance company to cut them a check to help cover their losses and put their lives back together, people living in the developing world have no such recourse. These people are even now in desperate need of help as they struggle to recover from the effects of the tsunami and face a second potential humanitarian catastrophe as disease threatens to ravage those who survived.

I have been heartened in recent days by the outpouring of aid from around the world. I could not be more proud of our own nation as the United States, true to its generous nature, freely gives millions in aid and sends its Navy and its Air Force racing to the disaster zone on a mission of peace. The young men and women of our military have again made us proud as they offer aid to those who have no hope.

Yet there is more than can be done. As is the case in most problems faced by society, government can't do it alone. Millions continue to pour into various charities for the relief effort from the good-hearted citizens of the United States. Let me encourage all of you to consider making a donation to a reliable charity towards the recovery efforts already underway. Although the days following Christmas and year-end property taxes may bring some financial strain I hope you all can dig a little deeper and make even a small contribution. You might want to consider a donation to the Red Cross. For more information visit their website at: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Often the giver receives as much or more than the recipient. The return to the giver is not necessarily measured in dollars and cents but it is always personally rewarding to lend a helping hand. Another advantage of giving is the teaching experience

it will provide for our children. What better way to teach our kids the character values of generosity and compassion than by getting them involved in helping the less fortunate? Personally, I have found that the Scriptural principle to be true that says, "Give, and it will be given to you . . . For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." I hope all of us will be challenged to do what we can in this time of terrific need to help alleviate the suffering of those affected by this tragedy.