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Relief Efforts Shine Amid Flooding Crisis

(A Letter to the Editor from Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter)

For the residents of southeastern Missouri, last week was one that we will vividly remember as we experienced another event in a long series of weather-related emergencies. This time: tremendous downpours and flooding that brought up to a foot of rain across portions of southeastern Missouri and delivered the worst flooding in decades.

The community of Piedmont in Wayne County was one of the most heavily affected areas, and all of the counties in my senate district — Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard and Wayne – are among the 70 counties declared disaster areas by President Bush. In my own home county of Stoddard, we also experienced widespread flooding.

The flooding conditions caused great hardships for many of us and for hundreds of thousands of other Missourians in our neighboring counties. Many were evacuated from their homes, lived in temporary shelters and were separated from their families before returning home to assess the damage and begin cleanup.

I had the opportunity to visit the Black River Coliseum in Poplar Bluff last week with Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder and talked with residents displaced by floodwaters. Lt. Gov. Kinder and I also met with Poplar Bluff and Butler County officials and took a firsthand look at the levee breaches along the Black River. The scenes we surveyed were staggering and really brought home the powerful and devastating effects of this phenomenal storm.

As I visited with residents, city and county officials, law enforcement personnel, people from local, state and federal agencies and with a large group of volunteers all providing relief to our communities, I was struck by their astute attention, commitment, and compassion in helping others during this life-threatening situation. I know I join countless others who want to thank them for their dedication and sacrifice to bringing much-needed relief during this difficult time.

I am confident that our communities are strong and that we will successfully work together as we now turn our focus to cleanup and recovery from this huge flooding catastrophe.

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*Senator Rob Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid,
Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*