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## **Mike Stagg Criticizes Recovery Czar Don Powell for Partisan Remarks**

The Bush administration's Gulf Coast recovery czar, Don Powell, engaged in partisan politics by promoting Republican Charles Boustany, who faces Democrat challenger Mike Stagg in Louisiana's 7th District congressional race. The Lafayette Daily Advertiser reported in its September 23rd edition that Powell "put a plug in" for Boustany's re-election, saying: "You couldn't be better represented than by your local congressman."

The citizens of the 7th District aren't so sure that Powell's partisan recommendation makes sense, says Stagg.

"Federal Gulf Coast Recovery czar Don Powell's inappropriate comments in support of Mr. Boustany's re-election effectively demonstrate that Republicans confuse loyalty to party with effective representation," Stagg said. "No clearer example of this confusion can be found than in FEMA's refusal to include the Rita-affected parishes of Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion in the extended round of cleanup funding. Mr. Boustany wrote letters but did little else to reverse that decision. The decision stood despite Boustany's 96 percent loyalty on votes supporting the House Republican leadership and an 85 percent voting record in support of the Bush agenda. Boustany's loyalty to his party leaders resulted in zero advantage to the people of the 7th District.

"Mr. Powell calls that effective leadership," Stagg said. "I call that honoring party loyalty at the expense of the people of the 7th District."

Charles Boustany has flip-flopped on FEMA when it was to his political advantage. Initially a loyal defender of FEMA and the federal response after Katrina hit, Boustany moderated his tone after Rita rolled into the western and coastal zones of his district. But that early glimpse of his true allegiance to the Bush administration and his continuing inability to get attention for western Louisiana's storm victims has taken a toll.

Boustany's role in recovery – or his lack of one – came to a head when the Katrina parishes, hit a month earlier by a weaker storm, were awarded federal support for 100 percent of their clean-up costs while Vermilion, Cameron, and Calcasieu Parishes were denied similar special consideration. It seems that Boustany's conspicuous party loyalty both on the floor of the House (where he voted the party line an astonishing 96 percent of the time) and after Katrina (when he didn't hesitate to lay blame on Louisiana's Democratic state and local governments run over by the season's first great storm) didn't buy him – or his district – much. The Katrina parishes represented by Democrats did better than Boustany's Rita-affected parishes.

And the voters have noticed. The anger over the botched federal response, and Boustany's ineffectual part in overcoming that, is easy to see. The failed federal response to Hurricane Rita remains a major issue in the congressional campaign.

"It's Mr. Boustany's bad luck that the events of Hurricane Rita and their aftermath have seared themselves into the minds of all those who lived through them and no amount of spinning by the congressman, the Republican Party, or its political appointees like Don Powell can change the impact of that experience," Stagg said. "Maybe that's why he didn't attend any of the storm anniversary commemorative events."

Powell's support of the loyalist Boustany, while unprincipled, is hardly surprising, coming as it does following a week in which inspectors general at Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Education produced reports indicating that programs in those departments were rife with cronyism, political favoritism and mismanagement. The Republican-controlled Congress has taken no steps to investigate those abuses, and Congressman Boustany has also been silent on those findings.

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