



CITY OF LAKE CHARLES

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 11, 2006

The Honorable Charles Boustany
U.S. House of Representatives
1117 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-1807

RE: Hurricane Rita Recovery in Southwest Louisiana

Dear Congressman Boustany:

First and foremost, we from Southwest Louisiana want to thank you for your support in our efforts to recover from Hurricane Rita. You have been very vocal in your effort to help us and we sincerely appreciate it. This letter is intended to give you information to support your efforts and to remind you that we stand ready to work with you in this effort. However, it has become very evident that others in our nation's capitol have forgotten about the destruction that occurred as a result of that storm.

We are not asking them to take our word for it. Just this week Governor Rick Perry testified in Washington D.C. and according to AP wire reports he requested that Texas be given \$2 billion dollars, because "states slammed by Katrina are getting more generous help than his state, which bore the brunt of Hurricane Rita." Governor Perry's significant funding request indicates his belief that Hurricane Rita was a destructive storm.

We do not intend to compete with our Texas neighbors for recovery money. We acknowledge that Hurricane Rita inflicted serious damage on Southeast Texas. But Southwest Louisiana also suffered significant devastation from this storm as well. The eye of the storm made landfall in Cameron Parish on September 24. The highly destructive northeast quadrant of the storm (with its winds and storm surge) was most destructive in Cameron Parish and in Calcasieu Parish in Louisiana. Cameron Parish as we knew it no longer exists. We, as Governor Perry, are concerned that we run the risk of being overshadowed by Hurricane Katrina when it comes time to allocate limited resources to the recovery effort.

Southwest Louisiana's elected officials, emergency responders and citizens worked hard to take the initiative to comply with evacuation orders, maintain discipline after the storm and truly prioritize our needs in a professional manner. Included below for your review is an overview of what happened in Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes during the Katrina and Rita storms. Hopefully this information will help you and your staff in your efforts to prevent Congress and the federal agencies responsible

for hurricane relief from forgetting the devastation that occurred across the coastal parishes of Louisiana and in Southwest Louisiana in particular.

Hurricane Katrina also impacted Southwest Louisiana. Calcasieu Parish alone welcomed approximately 20,000 evacuees from Hurricane Katrina by opening shelters at a cost of nearly \$1 million. The support of our community for the evacuees was overwhelming. Food, clothing, money and time were donated. Businesses and residents offered shelter, entertainment and support. The Lake Charles American Press described the effort as our community's finest hour. When Hurricane Rita approached our area, the first concern was to evacuate these people to safety.

When Hurricane Rita passed through Southwest Louisiana, our citizens listened to officials and heeded warnings to evacuate. Residents of Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes left the area on heavily congested roadways to the north along with residents of Texas who had already been given an order to evacuate. Gas supplies were limited and hotels to the north were full with evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, many who had evacuated a second time to escape Hurricane Rita.

Residents of Calcasieu Parish began returning to the area after the storm starting September 30, to "look and leave". They returned to find over 19,000 homes or approximately 25% of the housing stock was destroyed. Another 35% of the housing was damaged. Power was out throughout most of the area for one to three weeks causing widespread loss of water and sewer systems and shuttering industry and retail businesses. Gasoline was a rare commodity. Approximately half of the trees in Calcasieu Parish were destroyed or damaged.

Industries and public facilities were also heavily damaged. Lake Charles Regional Airport suffered over \$20 million in damage including the passenger terminal, which was damaged beyond repair. The facility was closed approximately fifteen days after the storm. Chennault International Airport, home to Northrop Grumman, suffered approximately \$40 million in damages and was closed for four weeks after the storm. Damages to other aviation industry businesses brought the estimated damage to our aviation industry to approximately \$90 million.

The Lake Area Industry Alliance, home of a vast petrochemical complex important to the entire United States, reported damages of approximately \$50 million to their members' facilities. Damage to off-shore rigs and the closure of the Port of Lake Charles (the nation's 12th largest port) caused supply disruptions to production facilities. Supply disruptions and power outages resulted in loss of production, worker layoffs and additional startup costs. Lyondell Chemical Company closed its facility, costing the community 295 well paying jobs with benefits; it will be impossible to replace this facility.

The six casinos of our gaming industry were shut down during the power outage. Harrah's two riverboat casinos and hotel were damaged beyond repair. **Harrah's facility is currently closed; our community has lost 2,000 jobs as a result.**

McNeese State University and SOWELA Technical College sustained extensive damage. The Calcasieu Parish School System experienced heavy damage to school facilities and closure of all public schools for approximately four weeks. Damage to education facilities is estimated at \$57 million.

The Calcasieu Parish Police Jury and area municipalities suffered damages to facilities of approximately \$30 million. The parish wide highway system, including three moveable bridges in Calcasieu Parish, required extensive debris removal and repairs to make them safe for traffic. The I-10 bridge over Lake Charles, the main east-west traffic artery through southwest Louisiana and across the southern U.S. was closed following the storm for structural inspection after a barge ran into a supporting structure. An early estimate of parish-wide highway damage is \$20 million.

Cameron Parish, our sister parish to the south was totally devastated. Although there was no loss of life, Cameron suffered the loss of a way of life. Approximately 90 percent of the homes in Cameron, the Parish seat were destroyed. Other communities suffered similar or worse fates. The major industries – oil, agriculture, seafood and tourism – were destroyed. It will take years for the residents to recover. And Southwest Louisiana will never be fully recovered until Cameron is rebuilt and back “in business” again.

Cameron Parish contains four wildlife refuges, all of which sustained significant damage. The Sabine National Wildlife Refuge of 125,000 acres was officially closed after Hurricane Rita. Facilities were destroyed and the landscape was littered with debris from damaged structures, vehicles, dead animals and hazardous chemical containers. The refuge cannot reopen until the hazardous debris is removed and there is no safety risk to the public. In 2004 the economic effect of the refuge and its visitation was \$9 million, supporting 108 jobs and \$1 million in tax revenue. This is an average return of \$10.18 for every federal dollar spent operating the refuge. Annually 300,000 people tour the Creole Nature Trail, which is designated an All-American Road. Nature trail brochures are being pulled out of circulation by bureau officials.

The Southwest Louisiana community immediately began cleaning up and repairing damages in order to begin recovery from this storm. Temporary “blue” roofs were installed on 17,104 houses and apartments. An estimated 5.73 million cubic yards of storm debris was collected, enough to cover a football field with a pile more than one half-mile high.

In addition to residents who were displaced from their homes due to damage, approximately 10,000 evacuees from other places are now residing in Calcasieu Parish. Hotel vacancy is essentially zero and there is a shortage of affordable housing for residents. Because of this housing shortage, many residents have not been able to return to the Parish. Many businesses are still unable to operate for normal business hours because of a shortage of workers. Although many minimum wage jobs are advertised and unfilled for long periods of time, unemployment in the Parish has more than tripled from 5.3% in 2004 to 16.2% in November 2005, an increase of 10.9% due to a number of complex reasons.

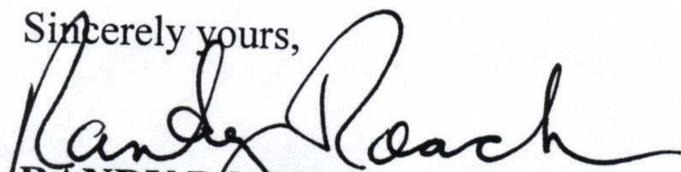
We understand the scale of the storm in Hurricane Katrina. And we understand that Southeast Texas was affected by the Hurricane Rita, but please do not penalize us for being aggressive in our efforts to help ourselves recover. It has been said by the FEMA Long Term Community Recovery Team that Southwest Louisiana is leading the state in the recovery effort. But true recovery requires more than just debris removal and new roofs. Because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Rita, we need to retool and rebuild the economy of Southwest Louisiana. We cannot depend on the existing businesses and industry to rebuild the economy of our area. We must be creative and aggressive in our efforts to both diversify and expand our economy if we are to accomplish the long term recovery goals FEMA and others have set for our area.

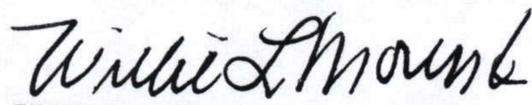
Hurricanes Rita and Katrina have impacted 30-40% of the economy of our state. It will take years to truly recover from this disaster in terms of real economic recovery. Please help us remind your colleagues that no state in the history of our great nation has ever suffered the extent of economic and social disruption that Louisiana has as a result of these two storms.

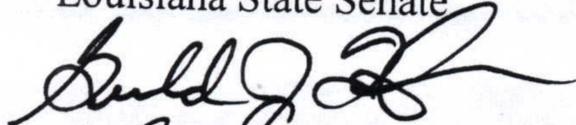
Some would say that it is this "can do" attitude that has prevented us in Southwest Louisiana from getting national media attention. We don't want media attention, but we do need your attention. Please assist us in getting our "fair share" of federal funding for our recovery effort. And please consider extending the GO Zone Legislation for parishes hardest hit by these storms. We need at least an additional two years to take advantage of the economic recovery offered by this bill. And when it comes to the allocation of Community Development Block Grant monies to the individual states, please include an allocation for Hurricane Rita parishes/counties as well.

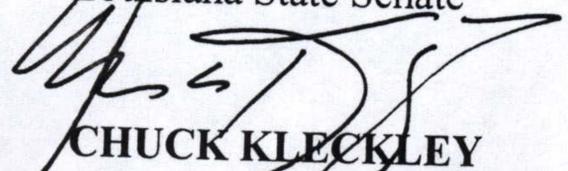
Thank you again for all you have done in the recent months to focus attention on the recovery of Southwest Louisiana. If you need additional information or we can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

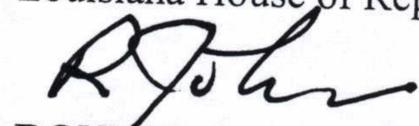

RANDY ROACH
Mayor, City of Lake Charles

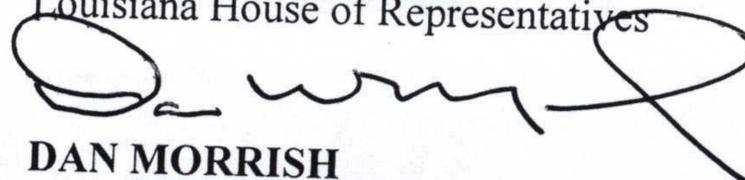

WILLIE MOUNT
Louisiana State Senate

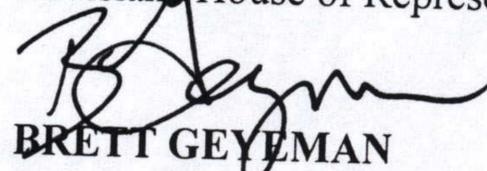

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