

**Councilmembers Fielkow, Clarkson, Head and Hedge-Morrell  
Attend Congressional Roundtable in New Orleans  
To Discuss Recovery**

News Release

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*Councilmembers Fielkow, Clarkson,  
Hedge-Morrell and Head*

**New Orleans, LA - June 1, 2009** - Councilmembers Arnie Fielkow, Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson, Stacy Head, and Cynthia Hedge-Morrell attended a field hearing of the U.S. House committee responsible for overseeing FEMA today. Councilmembers urged congressional leaders to reform the FEMA reimbursement process, forgive the City its Community Disaster Loans granted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and focus on a host of other recovery projects including coastal restoration and outfall canals.

U.S. Congressman Anh "Joseph" Cao and U.S. Congressman John L. Mica of Florida, both members of the U.S. House Transportation Committee, hosted the recovery roundtable, which was held at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. U.S. Congressman Steve Scalise also attended the roundtable, as well as other state and federal leaders, including representatives from FEMA.

Councilmembers-at-Large Arnie Fielkow and Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson urged congressional leaders to reform FEMA and the Stafford Act, which outlines how the federal government reacts to disasters.

"Katrina showed us that the federal government is ill-equipped to respond to major U.S. disasters," Councilmember Clarkson said. "The federal government needs to work to give local communities the same kind of disaster response it provides to international communities."

Council President Arnie Fielkow said, "It's time that the federal government and the local community reach a consensus on rebuilding efforts. Nearly four years after Katrina, we are still having this conversation, and that is unacceptable."

Councilmembers also discussed a host of recovery issues, including the forgiveness of Community Disaster Loans, coastal restoration and protection, and the redevelopment of the City's outfall canals.

District "B" Councilmember Stacy Head explained why forgiveness of the Community Disaster Loans (CDLs) is so vital for New Orleans.

"The forgiveness of CDLs has a ripple effect that especially reverberates at the local level," she said. "Once we know the CDLs are forgiven, our bond rating improves, and we can get credit easier and at a lower cost to our city. This enables us to provide more and better services to our citizens."

District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell, who chairs the Council's Budget Committee, focused on the need to reform the process by which FEMA reimburses municipal governments in the wake of disasters.

"We have a city charter that does not allow us to let contracts until we have the money in the bank. Yet FEMA will allocate money only to reimburse spent funds," she said. "When your city is under water and you have no tax base - that just doesn't make sense."


Council President Fielkow urged FEMA representative to look immediately into the gap between FEMA funding and City needs on NORD parks and playgrounds.

"We have a gap of more than \$60 million, and this is inexcusable," Fielkow said. "Our children need those parks and playgrounds now. Rebuilding them will have immediate benefits in the quality of life of our citizens."

Councilmember Clarkson urged congressional leaders to financially support the State's effort to restore coastal wetlands and to instruct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to use the best possible means of redeveloping the City's outfall canals at London Ave., Orleans Ave., and 17th St.

"The Corps needs to consider what is best for the long-term, sustainable storm protection New Orleans needs," Clarkson said. "We cannot allow the Corps to choose 'cheap' options that will ultimately put our area at risk for dramatic costs in life and property."

Councilmembers vowed to continue to work with local, state, and federal



leaders to push for reforms and a quicker pace to recovery.

"This much time and money spent by local, state, and federal governments on a recovery that has been minimal is absurd, un-American, and unacceptable," said Councilmember Clarkson. "Working together, we have to change that."

## New Orleans City Council

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans City government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; Council Vice President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S. Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.