

**Jefferson Parish
City of New Orleans, Orleans Parish
Plaquemines Parish
St. Bernard Parish
St. Tammany Parish**

December 5, 2007

The Honorable Mary Landrieu
United States Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Vitter
United State Senate
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable William Jefferson
United States House of Representatives
2113 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congressman Bobby Jindal
United States House of Representatives
1205 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Melancon
United States House of Representatives
404 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Landrieu, Senator Vitter, Congressman Jefferson, Congressman Jindal and
Congressman Melancon:

Thank you for your work to support the recovery of the New Orleans region and all of the areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We are encouraged by the recent passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the appropriation of an additional \$3 billion for the Road Home Program, and past legislative actions including the waiver of the match for disaster grants.

Today, we are requesting your assistance to have Congress reinstate 100% federal coverage of storm related debris removal in the most severely affected parishes - Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany - for a period of two additional years and Jefferson Parish for an additional three months, to allow for completion of the mission. Unfortunately, our efforts to have this basic and vital need fulfilled via normal administrative (FEMA) processes have been unsuccessful, which has motivated us to ask for legislative relief. Our communities and our citizens' lives were shattered by the hurricanes and subsequent floods as a result of problems with federally built levees. There should be an evolution in disaster aid to allow for a recovery of this magnitude from this man-made disaster.

Despite their restrictive interpretation of the debris mission, FEMA's own regulations state that one of the agency's goals is to "ensure economic recovery of affected communities to the benefit of the community-at-large." To ensure this recovery, we need continued federal coverage of the costs for debris removal which is not statutorily prohibited and is justified by many factors.

The extent of damage from Hurricane Katrina alone dwarfs previous disasters. The relief costs are approaching the total combined amount of FEMA assistance (both public and individual assistance) for fiscal years 1989-1994 (\$1.24 billion) as reported by the General Accounting Office in 1996. FEMA's figures show Hurricane Katrina's relief costs are over three times those of Hurricane Andrew. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers debris removal work for Hurricane Andrew continued for over two years in Metro-Dade County, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Proportionately, that comparison alone could justify several more years of debris assistance for our region.

Relief is necessary also because of how long homeowners have had to wait to receive financial relief. Two and a quarter years have passed and the Road Home program continues to move slowly in paying out the grants. To date only one-third of the applicants to the Road Home have received funding. Our citizens, many of whom are still displaced, are struggling to make decisions about returning. Securing the resources necessary to rebuild has been a severe burden. An added significant expense for debris removal might be the breaking point for many who would like to return and rebuild. Many homeowners are doing their own repairs due to limited available funding. They cannot afford significantly higher hauling and disposal costs.

The federal government itself has caused challenges that justify this request. Both citizens and their local governments have had to deal with confusion caused by revolving FEMA personnel, counterintuitive regulations and inconsistent responses to questions and requests. We recognize that our federal government, like our citizenry, is trying to respond to an unprecedented catastrophic disaster. Both extending the time and broadening the mission are warranted by this unprecedented situation.

Though each of our communities has different approaches to the handling of debris removal, we are all agreed that this extraordinary catastrophe requires extraordinary response from our federal government. All parishes are struggling with increasing piles of debris from gutting and reconstruction, and other debris related issues.

FEMA granted Jefferson Parish until Feb. 29, 2008 to complete all demolitions and private property debris removal (PPDR). We have received a Project Worksheet from FEMA for demolition work, and expect to start this work in the next few weeks; however, we have not yet received a Project Work Sheet from FEMA for the PPDR work. We estimate that there are approximately 1,000 of these properties left to complete. With no FEMA authorization to start this work, it will be extremely difficult to complete this work by the Feb. 29th deadline. Thus, we are requesting extension of 100% funding for an additional three months to complete the PPDR work in Jefferson Parish.

In New Orleans, approximately 1.5 million cubic yards of debris remain from over 300 homes on non-profits' lists that still have not been gutted. We have thousands of slabs from structures as a result of FEMA's mission assignment to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for demolition which must be removed in order for us to rebuild. Another issue is the discontinuance of the FEMA mission assignment to the USACE for the operation of the Elysian

Fields Citizen's Drop Off Site. This facility is not as yet renovated due to a lack of funds. Citizens are resorting to alternate and often times illegal disposal which further strains our severely limited resources. Lastly, we would also ask to extend the operation of the Household Hazardous Waste processing site beyond February 28, 2008. A major public health crisis could develop without continued assistance for all of these issues.

Plaquemines Parish has been working closely with FEMA and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) on debris removal. However, over the past few months there have been difficulties in working with the FEMA debris team on numerous issues regarding debris eligibility, the refusal to write versions to project worksheets, delay in writing requested project worksheets for clearly eligible storm generated debris and the time it takes FEMA to obligate debris project worksheets. GOHSEP staff agrees that our requests are valid and eligible under the Public Assistance Program. Due to the painfully slow process in writing and obligation of project worksheets, Plaquemines Parish has expended over \$15,000,000 of parish funds in debris removal that is pending FEMA reimbursement. The Parish needed to proceed with this debris removal without PW obligation since it was a necessity for our recovery. This Parish is still awaiting PWs to be written for an additional estimated \$40,000,000 in debris removal that remains to be removed. A more detailed letter outlining our critically important debris issues will be sent under separate cover.

St. Bernard was the parish hardest hit by both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Approximately 27,000 homes were damaged, with hundreds still to be gutted and demolished. Debris already remains in front of many that have been gutted – it will take several years to complete all of the debris operations. Without federal assistance, St. Bernard Parish will not have the resources to improve the neighborhoods and complete its economic recovery.

St. Tammany Parish continues to work to remove hundreds of abandoned structures through its condemnation process. These demolitions require that all legal requirements are met prior to the involuntary condemnation and demolition of hazardous structures. Work also continues to identify damaged trees and related debris for removal. Due to the expanse of the Parish and the amount of land with wooded areas bordering public rights of way and private property, this debris removal will continue for some time. Extensive work also needs to be done to rid the Parish of hurricane debris remaining in lakes and interior waterways. Lake Borgne, Lake Ponchartrain and the canals bordering the Coin du Lestin subdivision, to name a few, still have significant amounts of debris which pose a threat to the health and safety of residents and their property and hinders the economic recovery of the Parish. Unfortunately, the Parish's efforts to identify and remove this marine debris have been hampered by FEMA's inconsistent responses, morass of policies, procedures and bureaucracy. This failure to act on the part of FEMA in St. Tammany Parish needs to be addressed with 100% funding of all remaining debris removal in the Parish.

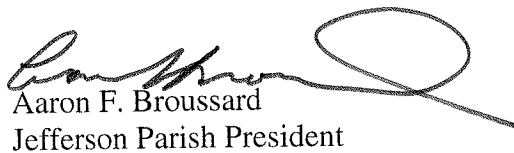
The attached Regional Planning Commission resolution shows that we speak with a unified voice from the region. All of our parishes need and deserve that debris operations continue - the

human and economic vitality of the entire region may be contingent on the outcome of this request.

Additionally, we request that Congress urge the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to extend its No Action Assurance (NAA) for these impacted parishes so that it coincides with the FEMA authorized demolition work, and does not expire until all demolitions are completed. The NAA waives many of the asbestos related demolition requirements for FEMA financed demolitions. Without the NAA, the structures scheduled for demolition will have to undergo asbestos abatement prior to their demolition. This will result in significant time delays as well as a significant increase in costs.

Thank you all for your tireless support of our region and Louisiana. Please feel free to contact us for any further information you may need on this issue.

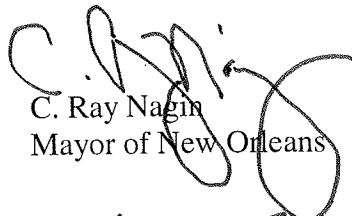
Sincerely,



Aaron F. Broussard
Jefferson Parish President



Thomas Capella
Jefferson Parish Council Chair



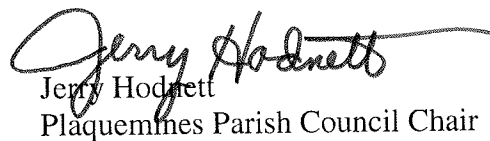
C. Ray Nagin
Mayor of New Orleans



Arnie Fielkow
New Orleans City Council President



Billy Nungesser
Plaquemines Parish President



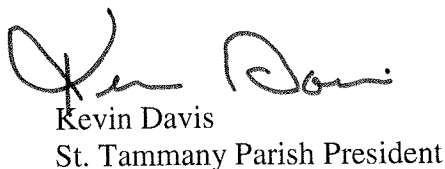
Jerry Hodnett
Plaquemines Parish Council Chair



Henry Rodriguez
St. Bernard Parish President



Joey DiFatta
St. Bernard Parish Council Chair



Kevin Davis
St. Tammany Parish President



Barry Bagert
St. Tammany Parish Council Chair

C: Governor Kathleen Blanco
Dr. Norman Francis, Chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority
Attachment