

# the JEFFERSON

## R E P O R T



U.S. House of Representatives

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### Jefferson Honors National Volunteer Week with President Bush

Congressman Jefferson flew on Air Force One with President Bush to New Orleans to celebrate National Volunteer Week and discuss a range of issues with the President including the President's most recent request for an additional \$4.2 billion for Louisiana's Road Home Recovery Program.

"The opportunity to both speak candidly with the President and honor those who have given their valuable time, including Spring Breaks, to serve our community was a great honor," Jefferson said. "National Volunteer Week certainly has been given new meaning by those who have volunteered in the Gulf region. I was happy to thank those Americans

who have committed to rebuilding New Orleans and urge the President to continue his commitment to us as well."

Jefferson discussed the continued needs for New Orleans and the Gulf Coast including levee funding, restoring the city's healthcare infrastructure, and continued attention to the housing crisis.

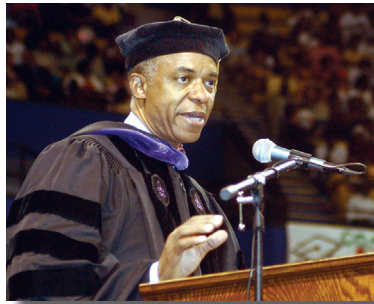
"The President assured me that he remains committed and, since that trip, Congress passed and HUD has authorized the additional \$4.2 billion for the Road Home Recovery Program that is now being launched in Louisiana."

### FEMA Grant Awards to Remove Cars and Debris and Aid SUNO

Congressman Jefferson announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded over \$16 million in disaster recovery grants to the City of New Orleans and the Louisiana Facility Planning and Control on behalf of Southern University in New Orleans (SUNO). The money will be used to collect and discard abandoned vehicles, restore city drainage capabilities, and rebuild SUNO's cafeteria and Old Science buildings to their pre-Katrina condition.

"This money will go far to help clean up and rebuild our city," he said. "We have all talked about and waited for the funds to remove the cars and other debris from our city. I trust that this money will contribute to the quick removal of cars and proper restoration of our drainage facilities."

FEMA awarded the City of New Orleans \$10.3 million to collect, relocate and store the more than 25,000 vehicles, 200 trailers and 800 boats abandoned in the city. The City will receive \$2.3 million to clean out 3,000 catch basins, replace over 266,000 linear feet of broken storm drain pipe, and perform related debris removal and disposal. The LA Facility Planning and Control office received two grants, each for \$1.7 million, to rebuild SUNO's cafeteria and Old Science buildings to pre-Katrina conditions. SUNO has been operating on



Jefferson gives keynote speech at Southern A&M University's spring Commencement about living a life in public service.

a FEMA trailer campus since Katrina destroyed its Pontchartrain Park campus.

"My office has worked closely with FEMA and SUNO to make sure that the university's recovery needs were met and I look forward to work starting on their campus as well," he continued. "As a university serving non-traditional, commuter students, SUNO serves an important need in our community. These funds should make a huge impact on our community's ability provide that access to these students."

FEMA will obligate the money to the State of Louisiana, which will ultimately distribute the funds to the awardees. The money will be reimbursed to the City and LA Facility Planning and Control pending the State's review of the request and the submission of appropriate documents.

### Corps Admits Responsibility for Levee Failures – Jefferson Urges Increased Federal Commitment to Hurricane Protection in Its Wake

In response to a report released by the Army Corps of Engineers, Congressman Jefferson encouraged Congress and the President to fully fund hurricane protection projects in Louisiana.

"The Army Corps' announcement, accepting responsibility for their role in the failure of our levees, confirms what we knew and what experts have been saying for months. The levees failed because of man-made design flaws. The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina was not one of nature, but instead one of man's design – a failure to design the levees properly

so that they could protect us from her wrath," he said.

"It is my hope that this revelation will lead the federal government to assume its responsibility in our recovery efforts by providing the substantial and adequate funding of hurricane protection systems along our state's coast – including our levees, barrier island and coastal restoration and drainage pump systems. Our recovery depends very much on the federal government's level of commitment to restore our safety and it is my sincere hope that the Corps' admission today will secure that commitment."

### Jefferson's GO Zone Act Brings \$400 Million in Tax Credit Allocations Home to New Orleans Companies

The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act, written and sponsored by Congressman Jefferson and Rep. Jim McCrery (R-LA) and passed in 2005, produced \$452 million in additional New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) for Louisiana companies. Under the fourth round of allocations for the NMTC program, the Treasury Department announced that 63 organizations were selected nationally, 13 of which benefited from the additional allocations for recovery and development in the Gulf Opportunity Zone under Jefferson and McCrery's legislation.

"The Treasury Department's announcement is a clear example of how the GO Zone legislation will benefit Louisiana and, specifically, recovery in New Orleans," Jefferson said. "It is crucial to rebuilding our economic infrastructure that businesses can now take advantage of these powerful incentives."

The following community and economic development entities received allocations: Advantage Capital Community Development Fund, LLC - \$70 million; American Community Renewably Energy Fund, LLC - \$42 million; Enhanced Delta Community Development, LLC - \$25 million; Hibernia Community Renewal Fund, LLC - \$100 million; Liberty Bank and Trust Company - \$60 million; MK La Charitable Healthcare Facilities Fund, LLC - \$80 million; National Cities Fund, LLC - \$75 million.

"This \$452 million will go a long way toward providing an economic boost to the New Orleans metropolitan area," he said. I will continue to find economic incentives to bring our city back. I thank my colleagues for recognizing and responding to the great needs of my constituents and the entire Gulf Coast by providing these critically important resources."

The Treasury Department's community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund administers the NMTC program. The fund is authorized to allocate up to \$16 billion in NMTC authority, including \$1 billion that was authorized in the GO Zone Act, for use over three years.



Reps. Sheila Jackson-Lee (TX), Charlie Melancon (LA), and Jefferson hear testimony about the recovery efforts at the NASA facility in Michoud.



## Republican Budget is a Step Backward for America and the Gulf Region

I strongly opposed the 2006 budget resolution, which passed the House in May.

The President's budget did not restore fiscal discipline, protect Social Security; did not narrow disparities for minorities in healthcare, education and wealth creation; and did not fund national priorities like education, veterans' programs, and community development programs.

Worse still, given our present recovery needs from Hurricane Katrina, the budget fails to acknowledge that recovery is a long-term effort. Recovery in New Orleans will not be achieved in a single fiscal year, and it should not be accomplished through emergency appropriations. There are a number of pieces of the recovery that will take time to achieve, for example, enhancing

the levees and the hurricane and flood protection systems along the Gulf coast and restoring homes and businesses. The Army Corps of Engineers has told the Congress repeatedly that this project will take from 5 to 7 years to complete, and yet not only does the budget provide no funding for this project, it actually cuts overall funding for the Corps of Engineers at a time of extreme need. I have called for significant additional funding to enhance our hurricane and flood protection system back home.

Additionally, for my constituents and the millions of Americans all along the Gulf coast whose lives were turned upside down by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the budget adversely affects programs that are essential to our recovery. It starves housing programs at a time when, along the Gulf coast, we are facing the gravest housing crisis in our nation's long history. When we need them most, cuts in education economic development programs supported by the Community Development Block Grant program, which was used to send



grants to homeowners in Louisiana in Mississippi, also miss the mark.

The budget is used as a guide for the appropriations process, which is now in full swing. In spite of the disappointing budget, I will continue to fight for increased funding for Army Corps hurricane and flood protection projects, education, housing, healthcare, and economic development funding so that we can forge ahead with our recover in the short and long term.

## Jefferson Backs FEMA Off May 31st Evictions

Anticipating the eviction of thousands upon the May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline ending some FEMA housing vouchers, Congressman Jefferson urged FEMA to implement a plan for evacuees. Jefferson made the following speech on the House floor:

"Mr. Speaker, after almost nine months, I suppose it doesn't surprise anyone to hear that FEMA is failing the citizens of the Gulf coast. In the wake of the storms, FEMA expressly advised the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that they could expect one year of assistance. Moreover, section 408 of the Stafford Act provides for 18 months of assistance to victims of natural disasters.

"Yet just nine months after these devastating storms, FEMA is working feverishly—not to house the victims of the hurricanes, but to terminate their housing assistance, to kick them out into the street without any assurance that the survivors will be able to find housing

for themselves or their families.

"Why? Because FEMA says it's time to move on. May 31 is the deadline. After that, you're on your own.

"There is a reason the Stafford Act provides for more than \$20,000 in aid per household and for up to eighteen months of assistance. The Stafford Act, unlike FEMA, recognizes that every disaster is different and that each disaster cannot be treated the same.

"My constituents, my neighbors, my friends are suffering, and FEMA's answer is to say "Move on," but FEMA is unable or unwilling to tell them where to move or how to pay for it.

"Over the next few months, our state's housing plan, The Road Home, will be up and running; SBA loan funds will begin to flow into homeowners' hands; insurance claims will be resolved and paid; and then the people of New Orleans will begin rebuilding in earnest.

"Within a few months, more of the housing gap

will be bridged as folks back home move into their own houses.

"FEMA has failed to submit its plan for permanent and transitional housing to Congress, which was due more than four months ago. So FEMA continues to operate without an overall plan, instituting more rolling deadlines and bureaucratic bungling which has brought additional hardship to survivors and their families. FEMA cannot get its act together, and yet it is unrepentant in pushing victims of the hurricanes out onto the streets.

"The President has the authority to issue waivers, to make adjustments to accommodate the survivors. FEMA also can behave more reasonably, more humanely.

"Until FEMA has a workable plan for transitional housing for these American survivors, it must not evict them. To do so is unconscionable."

## Medicare Penalty to be Waived for Hurricane-Affected Seniors

Under questioning by Congressman Jefferson during a recent congressional hearing, Medicare Administrator, Dr. Mark McClellan, agreed for the first time that seniors affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will have until the end of the year to file for prescription drug benefits without having to pay a penalty. The testimony responds to urgent calls for clarification made by U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., and others, following a New Orleans Times-Picayune article that revealed that evacuees were being penalized despite an extension allowing additional time to join and switch plans.

"Dr. McClellan, can you assure me today that your agency will take the necessary measures to ensure that those seniors affected by Hurricane Katrina can access the prescription drug plans without imposing lifetime penalties or benefit lapses?" Jefferson asked.

Dr. McClellan said the more than 250,000 Louisiana seniors who were unable to file for Medicare Part D prescription coverage by the national May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline will now have until December 31, 2006, to file without penalty if they live in one of 31 hurricane-impacted parishes.

This commitment is vital to seniors accessing the new prescription drug benefits and other Medicare programs on which they are relying so heavily

"New Orleans has the most low-income seniors in the hurricane affected area and this news is extremely important to providing the healthcare services our seniors need," Jefferson said.

## Congress Re-authorizes the Voting Rights Act of 1965

In July, Congressman Jefferson spoke on the House floor urging the renewal of the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was approved by an overwhelming majority of the U.S. House of Representatives. The act was passed under a bipartisan agreement to renew important provisions in the Act, which were set to expire in 2007, for an additional 25 years.

"The bipartisan reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act reinforces Congress' commitment to fair and equitable voting rights of all citizens, as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution," proclaimed Jefferson. "After extensive hearings, the record showed that the Voting Rights Act is just as relevant and necessary today as it was in 1965."

The vote was originally scheduled as a suspension bill in June, to be passed under unanimous consent and without amendments, but was stalled when a handful of Members complained that their amendments were not considered. Those amendments, Jefferson and many others argued, threatened to gut the most important protections the Act provides – including Section 5, which requires pre-clearance for some states to make changes to their voting procedures, and Section 203,

providing language assistance. Those amendments, though offered today, all failed and the Act passed successfully as agreed upon by the House Democratic and Republican leadership.

"In Louisiana, the state legislature has faced objections to proposed changes in every decade since the historic bill was signed," he said, pointing to the need to maintain the pre-clearance requirement. "My mother suffered through the humiliation of a literacy test herself, then helped register other African-Americans to vote by teaching them how to pass literacy tests before the Voting Rights Act. Yet, since its passage, challenges to minority voting rights continue in my state and across the South."

Since Section 5 coverage of the state began, the Civil Rights Division has objected to discriminatory voting changes in Louisiana 146 times, 96 of which have occurred since the last extension in 1982. That is to say 65% of the objections placed against the state have occurred since Congress last extended protections to minority voters.

The Act will now go to the Senate for vote before the President signs it into law.

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