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DEPUTY WHIP

Armed Services

Banking Housing and Urban Affairs

Commerce Science and Transportation

Environment and Public Works

Small Business and Entrepreneurship

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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BY HAND **IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUESTED**

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 25000

Dear President Obama:

I welcome and appreciate the announcement that you will travel to the Gulf Coast this month to see firsthand both the progress the region has made in hurricane recovery and the challenges it still faces.

In light of your visit, I would like to bring your attention to the top recovery priorities. I urge you to give these priorities your most serious consideration

- **Outfall Canals.** Seventy percent of the catastrophic flooding in Greater New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina was the result of the breach of the three outfall canals. This failure was because of design flaws of a U S Army Corps of Engineers project.

Currently, the Corps is planning to continue to push for a permanent solution for the outfall canals known as Option 1. I both strongly disagree with this approach and express my desire that the Corps not move forward with Option 1 simply because it is the cheapest when Option 2/2a is clearly more reliable and carries less flooding risk. The Corps has never done a clear, rigorous, cost-benefit or comparative risk analysis of these different options.

I hope that, at a minimum, you will adopt the approach that was included in the FY2010 Energy and Water Appropriations bill, but that was stripped out in conference at the behest of the Corps. This would provide the rigorous cost-benefit or comparative risk analysis that has been lacking.

- **Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP).** While the federal taxpayer so generously aided the recovery efforts, the award of those recovery funds also artificially inflated per capita income, which will cause Louisiana's FMAP match to drop to

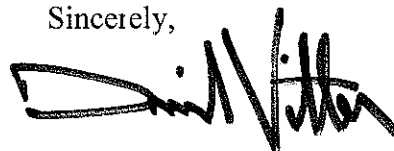
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unsustainable levels. In 2011, Louisiana's FMAP match will sharply decrease from 80 percent to 63 percent, which the state cannot afford. Experiencing this severity of a drop could negate much of the progress Louisiana has made since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit in 2005, and would result in decreased access to health care services for Louisiana Medicaid beneficiaries.

- **Use of Draft Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs).** The new DFIRMs developed since 2005 place many coastal Louisiana communities and surrounding areas in high-risk V-Zones, which will incur burdensome flood insurance and, in many cases, absolutely prohibit development. While I recognize FEMA's advanced data collection and cartographic technologies, the agency is citing preliminary, draft DFIRMs in denying Hazard Mitigation Grants to affected cities and parishes. These grants are crucial to community recovery, and only official, final maps should be consulted. Several parishes have found significant inaccuracies or feature omissions in the new draft DFIRMs. A cumulative state-wide evaluation of DFIRMs, rather than a parish-by-parish analysis, would be less burdensome on communities and more efficient for FEMA.
- **Community Disaster Loan (CDL) Forgiveness.** The current draft regulations to allow CDL forgiveness published by the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA are too restrictive given the scope and uniqueness of this disaster. They do not take into consideration the special circumstance Louisiana faced during and after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The regulations are currently being reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget. I ask that you strongly consider additional factors that would allow for forgiveness of these loans for all of the devastated communities.

I am very grateful for your time in the region. I ask that you be an active partner in the ongoing work with regard to the unresolved issues listed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Vitter". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

David Vitter
U.S. Senator