

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

October 20, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

First, let me thank you for your support throughout our response and our initial recovery phase from the devastating flooding events impacting the state of Louisiana. Starting with your visit to Baton Rouge to your budget request of Congress for \$2.6 billion for our long-term recovery, the reduction of the State's cost share to 10%, and HUD Secretary Julián Castro's allocation of funds to Baton Rouge and Lafayette for immediate recovery needs, your administration has clearly been focused on making sure Louisiana is equipped for a full, resilient recovery. Securing a recovery appropriation of \$438 million shortly after the floods in the Continuing Resolution is an amazing accomplishment that has given our people hope for their futures.

As you know, we continue to re-evaluate and assess the unmet needs of the people of Louisiana as more data and information become available. Because of FEMA's expedited ramping up of inspectors, our data on housing damages is getting more and more clear, impacts to small businesses are starting to come into view, and we are just beginning to gather critical data relative to infrastructure damages. Our needs are still great, and I would like to take this opportunity to update the requests I have made for additional federal assistance needed to bring Louisiana back stronger than before the floods.

While the initial appropriation of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) provides hope to those impacted and allows us to begin to address the housing needs of our most vulnerable citizens, it is inadequate to address the full range of housing, infrastructure and economic impacts that threaten to destroy many of our communities. Further, if we are to rebuild the strong, resilient communities we all know need to rise from this disaster, we will need to make investments in water management infrastructure that will pay dividends for decades to come. As such, I am requesting an additional \$3.3 billion in CDBG funds over and above the funds already appropriated, as described below.

Based on analysis of FEMA's Individual Assistance data, our current estimate of unmet needs in homeowner occupied housing alone is \$2.8 billion. Over 50% of the homes impacted by these floods were not in FEMA's 100-year floodplain, and 78% of the impacted homes did not have flood insurance. Some communities had over 80% of their homes impacted by these floods. And 25% of our impacted

residents were renters in a market that was already severely challenged with respect to the availability of affordable housing prior to the floods. Clearly, we will need additional funds to provide housing assistance to ensure these communities come back.

Regarding damage to existing infrastructure, our collection of initial data from the field suggests that total FEMA Public Assistance grants will approach \$1 billion, placing a huge burden on state and local governments to not only pay the cost share for FEMA Public Assistance, but to repair and rebuild these facilities to 21st century standards of function and resilience. This does not include damages to roads and bridges, which are estimated at over \$100 million.

As with infrastructure, the overall impacts on farms and businesses are unclear, but certainly large. Current estimates for direct damages to businesses and agriculture exceed \$3.2 billion, with 6,000 businesses flooded, and many more businesses impacted that are in communities that have been devastated with large population losses of customers and workers. We expect to need public investments of \$120 million to prevent widespread closures of small businesses and the resulting loss of jobs.

In addition to the recovery needs articulated above, I believe it is imperative that we make the types of investments in water management, infrastructure enhancement, floodplain management, and green infrastructure that will transform our communities into strong, resilient places that can weather any future storm. I commit to using our allotted Hazard Mitigation funds for these purposes, but believe an additional \$600 million is needed to do this well. I understand that this is a relatively new approach to disaster funding, but I believe the State of Louisiana is the ideal place to make this type of far reaching, long-sighted investment in the future of our communities, a future that relies less on federal assistance and more on resilient communities.

In addition to the CDBG funds requested above, I would also like to reiterate my request for other targeted assistance that will help to make this recovery complete. These include \$92 million in Social Services Disaster Block Grants that we need to ensure an appropriate response to the mental health and child-care challenges our families face in the aftermath of these floods.

In keeping with our strategy of addressing future flood impacts through large-scale, basin-wide projects, I am also requesting the inclusion of \$125 million in funding for the Comite River Diversion Canal in legislation this fall. While this project is certainly not a silver bullet for the flooding issues in the Comite and Amite River Basins, I believe it is an important part of the solution.

Much of the infrastructure damage inflicted by these floods was to roads and bridges across the state, and we are still assessing the total damages. By clearing the FHWA Emergency Highway backlog of \$724 million, Louisiana would have access to \$39 million for addressing critical infrastructure needs in the state.

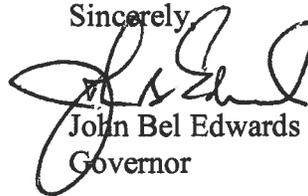
Finally, I know Congressman Charles Boustany is seeking such measures as expanded low-income housing tax credits, increased rehabilitation tax credits to help restore commercial buildings,

President Barack Obama
October 20, 2016
Page 3

employer provided housing incentives, and below-market mortgages in the disaster areas, and I ask for your support of these measures for the families and businesses impacted by these flood events.

Your commitment to the recovery of the people of Louisiana has been clear and steadfast, and for this I thank you deeply. We are working hard every day at understanding and addressing the recovery needs of our people and the future of our state, and I am asking for your continued support as we seek to make this recovery full and sustainable.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Shaun Donovan, Director of the Office of Management and Budget
U.S. Senator David Vitter
U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Congressman Steve Scalise
Congressman Cedric Richmond
Congressman Charles W. Boustany, Jr., M.D.
Congressman John C. Fleming, M.D.
Congressman Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Congressman Garret Graves