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Dear Senator:

Less than two months after Hurricane Katrina, Congress passed the Community Disaster Loan Act of 2005, PL 109-88. It required local governments receiving Katrina and Rita aid to reimburse the federal government even though Congress rightly forgave this debt for victims of other disasters such as 9/11 and numerous storms, including Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki.

I urge you to support legislation allowing the cancellation of certain loans under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Currently, at least two bills now before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee would repeal the prohibition in PL 109-88, the Community Disaster Loan Act of 2005, which forbids cancellation of these community disaster loans by the federal government. One example is S. 253, the Disaster Loan Fairness Act of 2007, which was introduced by Louisiana's Senior Senator, Mary Landrieu, who is also a member of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

Local governments across Louisiana are struggling to scrape together funds to reimburse the federal government for recovery assistance as they labor to perform their everyday duties and

functions. You now have the opportunity to waive this match for Louisiana, just as the federal government has done for victims of several other disasters.

It's time this wrong is righted. It is unacceptable that the state of Louisiana is burdened with the early declaration that prohibited our small towns and rural parishes and other local governments from seeking loan forgiveness.

Throughout our entire recovery, Louisiana has not asked for a penny more than our citizens deserve. Our simple request is that the people of Louisiana be treated fairly and with dignity and receive an appropriate share of federal assistance that is proportionate to the damage we experienced. The men, women, and children of Louisiana deserve the same local match waiver provided by previous Congresses and multiple presidents.

Please support legislation to relieve our communities of an unfair burden and allow them to focus on recovery. Louisiana communities, operating under severe budget restraints, cannot meet the needs of our people, restore their economies and rebuild stronger than ever before while also shouldering the costs of local matches for federal aid.

My staff and I remain ready to work with you in all aspects of Louisiana's unprecedented recovery. Next week, I will be in Washington fighting for the federal support our people need and deserve. I appreciate the opportunity to share Louisiana's story with you and advance Louisiana's agenda.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor