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February 1, 2007

BY HAND
IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUESTED

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Dear President Bush,

I understand that your proposed fiscal year 2008 budget, to be submitted to Congress very soon, will propose moving \$1.3 billion from approximately six categories of vital, ongoing Corps of Engineers work in Southeast Louisiana, including levee armoring and building permanent pumps at Lake Pontchartrain, and moving it to other categories of flood control work in the area.

I write to strongly oppose this move and to urge you to submit an amendment to your budget request reinstating all of this money to its original East Bank purposes, while also giving the Corps greater flexibility in performing East Bank work. In order to address shortfalls in the West Bank categories to which this money was to be moved (a very real problem), the budget request amendment should also request an additional \$1.3 billion for these areas.

Mr. President, you made a clear, firm commitment to rebuild our area stronger than ever before in your Jackson Square speech of September 15, 2005. You have kept that commitment with your leadership to date, particularly on funding requests, and I thank you again. But I believe your fiscal year 2008 budget proposal would be a step back from that commitment, however unintended.

Your Administration's proposed budget strategy is a reaction to two very regrettable facts:

1. The Corps of Engineers' original cost estimate for the work to which you committed is short by several billions of dollars; and
2. The Corps bureaucracy is as flawed and bogged down as ever; as a result, the Corps is not acting with the appropriate sense of urgency for many vital projects, including those that I believe would be delayed by several years with this reallocation.

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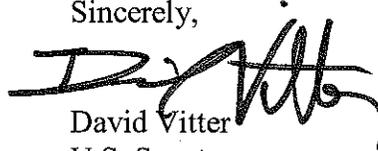
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The solution is not to kick the can down the road with regard to insufficient funds but to begin to address it (by \$1.3 billion) in the fiscal year 2008 budget submission. The multi-billion dollar shortfall will be too large to realistically address in one full swoop in fiscal year 2009. And the solution is to effectively streamline Corps activity and get it back on schedule with vital emergency work such as pumps at Lake Pontchartrain and levee armoring.

Mr. President, I urge you to take immediate action. I am deathly afraid that this vital, emergency post-Katrina work is now being treated like typical Corps projects that take decades to complete. We will not recover if this happens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Vitter", written over the printed name.

David Vitter
U.S. Senator