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January 5, 2007

Senator Harry Reid
528 Hart Senate Office Building
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Senator Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and Boxer:

As you develop the agenda for the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) for the 110th Congress, I strongly urge you to include the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) at the top of the list.

As a Senate negotiator on the WRDA bill in 2006, I worked closely with others and was able to make enormous progress on the protection, restoration and improvement of Louisiana's hurricane, coastal and flood infrastructure. Critical agreements between the House and Senate were reached on virtually all issues pertaining to Louisiana. As we continue deliberation on the WRDA bill early this year, discussions must build upon the previously-settled items included in our conference negotiations. These are all provisions which have the full and enthusiastic support of the entire Louisiana Congressional Delegation, House and Senate, Democrat and Republican. Our negotiated agreements include the following:

Broad-scale

- Full integration of our water resource projects in south Louisiana, including hurricane, coastal, flood and navigation.
- Establishment of the Louisiana Water Resources Council to serve as the exclusive peer review entity for water resource projects in the disaster areas of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- Inclusion of a cabinet-level or assistant secretary-level multi-agency Task Force to ensure that all relevant federal agencies are contributing resources and expertise and coordinating actions to further the goals of our water resource projects in south Louisiana.
- Creation of an Integration Team (under the Task Force) to ensure that our projects are being carried out in an efficient and coordinated manner.

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- Clarification that the use of outer continental shelf energy revenues for use as a non-federal match on Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) and hurricane protection projects is approved (as is the precedent).
- The allowance of "credits" to be transferred between various features of our coastal protection projects.
- Authorization for the Corps of Engineers to accept voluntary non-government payments from individuals, corporations, or organizations to serve as the cost share for the State of Louisiana.
- In an effort to keep projects on track or expedite construction, allowance for parish and municipal governments, levee boards, and the State of Louisiana to get credit for work performed on water resource projects even if the Corps share of funds (from 65%-100% of project costs) is immediately unavailable.
- Authorization of an additional \$150 million (I secured \$75 million earlier in 2006) to restore the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and additional steps toward closure of the channel.

Hurricane Protection and Flood Prevention

- Authorization of the entire \$841 million Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection project (adjusted for inflation/cost increases).
- An expedited, privileged authorization procedure for any project included in the "Category 5" study and requested by the President (i.e. Donaldsonville to the Gulf, Alexandria to the Gulf, New Orleans East Barrier Plan, Southwest Louisiana).
- An authorization increase from \$3.7 billion to at least \$4.63 for the New Orleans-area restoration and protection features identified in the Fourth Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Emergency Supplemental.
- Under specified conditions, an increase in authorization above \$4.63 billion to construct, repair, redesign, raise or improve:
 - a. The outfall canals on Lake Pontchartrain;
 - b. The levees and floodwalls in south Louisiana by raising them higher and armoring;
 - c. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal floodgates;
 - d. I-wall to T-wall conversions;
 - e. The storm-proofing of pump stations;

f. Non-Federal hurricane protection in Terrebonne and Plaquemines parishes.

- Authorization of a consolidated hurricane protection project in Jean Lafitte at a cost of \$100 million with an expedited authorization process for additional needs above \$100 million.
- Levee lifts and other improvements in Lafourche Parish to meet at least the 100 year level of flood protection for these communities at a cost of \$90 million, with an expedited authorization procedure for additional needs.

Louisiana Coastal Area

- Authorization of the five "near term" and "additional near term" LCA projects (including the Chenier Plain), totaling at least \$1.8 billion (including modifications). Pursuant to our agreements, the LCA authorization should include, at a minimum:
- Authorization of a Science and Technology program to address the scientific uncertainties of the LCA at a cost of at least \$100 million.
- Authorization of a beneficial use of dredge material program to ensure that the use of dredge material is coordinated with the dredging currently performed on our navigation channels at a cost of \$100 million or more.
- Establishment of a Demonstration Program to test and prove restoration technologies and procedures for large-scale implementation at a cost of at least \$100 million.
- Modifications to existing projects to ensure consistency with the LCA at a cost of \$10 million.
- Expedited deadlines for all remaining LCA projects.
- Expedited, privileged authorization procedure for any of the six "next phase" LCA projects requested by the President.
- In lieu of traditional cost/benefit justification requirements, a blanket authorization to allow for the environmental benefits of restoring Louisiana's coast to serve as the only justification required.
- Corps of Engineers authorization to restore wetlands in areas where the restoration will help prevent damage from hurricanes and flooding.

In addition to the critical items detailed above, the bill will also authorize important navigation, environmental infrastructure, recreation and other water resource needs around the state.

As you can tell from the agreed upon items described above, the passage of WRDA is not a luxury or even a priority for the people of Louisiana. It is a necessity.

With the Corps' repeated failures to meet deadlines and provide the requisite protection for the 2006 hurricane season, we were fortunate that further destruction was avoided. The immediate passage of WRDA will help to prevent the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita from becoming victims once again.

Chairwoman Boxer, pursuant to our conversation several weeks ago and as a member of the EPW Committee, I look forward to our committee briefings and field hearing in Louisiana early this year to further explore the hurricane, flood and coastal protection, energy, navigation and environmental goals in the state.

Thank you for your support during the WRDA conference in 2006. I look forward to ensuring that all of these crucial matters which we achieved will be protected if not expanded upon in 2007.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The letters are stylized and cursive.

David Vitter