

May 15, 2006

Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker of the House  
Capitol Building, H-232  
Washington, DC 20515-6501

Dear Speaker Hastert,

As faith-based organizations and faith communities across the United States, we appreciate your efforts to help Gulf Coast families rebuild their homes and lives.

Now, in negotiations over a final conference agreement on emergency supplemental spending, we fear that Katrina families may become casualties in a battle over earmarks.

We urge you to retain three critical Katrina-related housing provisions in the emergency funding legislation. These housing provisions, detailed below, are directly related to Katrina, respond to a true emergency and are vital to restoring hope for those who lost so much and for reviving the region's economy.

(1) \$1 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds added by the Senate to assure that Louisiana receives the full \$4.2 billion it needs to move forward with its long-awaited "Road Home" housing plan. Louisiana will use these funds to help homeowners rebuild and begin to restore rental housing that is so important in a region now suffering a labor shortage due to the lack of affordable housing. Louisiana has engaged in an arduous process of developing a recovery plan. PICO is concerned that under-funding the Louisiana housing plan will cause further delay, complicate the recovery process and leave low-income families shortchanged.

(2) \$202 million in additional funds for section 8 tenant- and project-based rental housing assistance: This funding includes \$100 million in project-based rental assistance that will support the renovation and construction of 13,500 apartments for low-income families. Rents in the New Orleans region have doubled and tripled since Katrina. The region's economy is being held back by a lack of affordable rental housing for employees. With the vast majority of federal resources committed to homeowners, it is important that there be funding for affordable rental housing.

(3) \$1.2 billion for Emergency Housing Pilot Programs: The Senate set aside an additional \$1.2 billion for alternatives to FEMA travel trailers, which are widely viewed as inadequate for families, unsafe and overly expensive. The pilot program would fund modular housing, such as Katrina Cottages, that cost less money, offer families better protection from the wind and rain and can be used as the basis for permanent housing.

Finally, we strongly urge you to support legislation that would dedicate a portion of the federal royalties from drilling off the Gulf Coast to long-term coastal restoration and storm protection. This long-term solution is critical to protecting a region that is essential to the economy and cultural heritage of the United States.

Thousands of people from across the United States have traveled to the Gulf Coast to volunteer. Hundreds of thousands of people have sent donations. People of faith across the United States want to see Congress do right by Gulf Coast families and communities. We urge you to protect the housing needs of Katrina families in negotiations over the supplemental spending bill.

PICO is a national network of faith-based community organizations working to strengthen families and improve communities in 150 cities and towns in 18 states. Louisiana Interfaiths Together (PICO LIFT) is a statewide organization of more than 100 churches in six faith-based federations, including All Congregations Together in New Orleans.

Signed,

Fr. John Baumann, Executive Director  
PICO National Network

**Member Federations**

- Louisiana Interfaiths Together
- All Congregations Together, New Orleans, LA
- Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing, Thibodaux, LA
- Delta Interfaith Network, Lake Providence, LA
- Working Interfaith Network, Baton Rouge, LA
- Anchorage Faith & Action - Congregations Together, Anchorage, AK
- Baldwin County ACT, Fairhope, AL
- Birmingham Area Interfaith Sponsoring Committee, Birmingham, AL
- Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action, Berkeley, CA
- Community Voice L.A., Los Angeles, CA
- Congregations Building Community-Modesto, CA
- Congregations for Civic Action, Escondido, CA
- Congregations Organizing for Renewal, Hayward, CA
- Contra Costa County Interfaith Supporting Community Organization, Martinez, CA
- Faith in Community, Fresno, Fresno, CA
- Greater Long Beach Interfaith Community Organization, Long Beach, CA
- Inland Congregations United for Change, San Bernardino, CA
- North Valley Sponsoring Committee, Sacramento, CA
- Oakland Community Organizations, Oakland, CA
- Orange County Congregation-Community Organization, Anaheim, CA
- Peninsula Interfaith Action, San Carlos, CA
- People Acting in Community Together, San Jose, CA
- People and Congregations Together, Stockton, CA
- PICO California, Sacramento, CA
- Sacramento Area Congregations Together, Sacramento CA

San Diego Organizing Project, San Diego, CA  
San Francisco Organizing Project, San Francisco, CA  
Congregations Building Community, Windsor, CO  
Metro Organizations for People, Denver, CO  
Congregations for Community Action, Melbourne, FL  
Federation of Congregations United to Serve, Orlando, FL  
Greater Pensacola Community Organization, Pensacola, FL  
Wyandotte County Interfaith Sponsoring Council, Kansas City, KS  
Essex County Community Organization, Lynn, MA  
Massachusetts Communities Action Network, MA  
Metropolitan Interfaith Congregations Acting for Hope, Framingham, MA  
United Interfaith Action Fall River, MA  
Kansas City Church Community Organization, Kansas City, MO  
Camden Churches Organized for People Camden, NJ  
Tri-County Congregational Organizing, South Jersey, NJ  
Central Brooklyn Churches, Brooklyn, NY  
Community Action Project, Brooklyn, NY  
Interfaith Action, Rochester, NY  
Queens Congregations United for Action, Corona, NY  
Congregations United for Neighborhood Action, Allentown, PA  
Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project, Philadelphia, PA  
Faith Works in the Roanoke Valley, Roanoke, VA  
Vermont Interfaith Action, Burlington, VT  
Goshen Faith Community Concerns, Torrington, WY