

Congressman Cazayoux Files First Bill

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Bill will free up grant money for Gulf Coast public housing authorities

WASHINGTON, DC- Congressman Don Cazayoux introduced his first bill today, entitled the "Public Housing Disaster Relief Act of 2008." The bill will allow FEMA to directly assist public housing authorities by eliminating section 9(k) from the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act that pertains to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"As we have seen too often, the biggest obstacle that Gulf Coast residents face is not the will to rebuild; it is red tape from the federal government," Cazayoux said. "My bill will allow FEMA to directly assist public housing authorities trying to rebuild affordable and quality housing for those who need it. This measure is an important step in the long-term recovery of Louisiana and Mississippi."

Under normal circumstances in natural disasters, funding section 9(k) would be sufficient to cover losses incurred by public housing authorities. However, the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita quickly exhausted those funds and section 9(k) has since been underfunded. Unfortunately for Gulf Coast public housing authorities, congressional appropriations law prevents them from accessing FEMA grant money when there is a pre-existing account at HUD.

Congressman Cazayoux's bill would eliminate section 9(k), freeing up money from section 406 of the Stafford Act administered by FEMA to assist Gulf Coast public housing authorities. The bill is the product of a joint hearing between the Financial Services Committee and the Homeland Security Committee and it has the support of the Administration.

"I want to thank members of the Financial Services and Homeland Security Committees for recognizing this problem, and I want to thank Congressman Childers for co-sponsoring the bill with me," Cazayoux said. "By passing this bill, we will help the people of the Gulf Coast and ensure a quicker recovery for areas affected by future natural disasters."

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