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**“From housing to health care to education,
the region remains in a state of crisis.”**

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, August 2009

An Open Letter to Speaker Pelosi

August 24, 2009

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina took the lives of more than 1,836 people, displaced more than one million residents, and damaged more than 200,000 Gulf Coast homes in a 90,000 square mile area. The damage caused by the flooding, storm surge, and high winds destroyed schools, hospitals, roads, community centers, bridges, parks, and forestlands. In the end, the Gulf Coast suffered more than \$100 billion in damage, making Katrina the costliest and most deadly hurricane in the history of the United States.

Four years after Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf Coast remains in a state of crisis. Today, the public infrastructure is still badly damaged; thousands of residents live in toxic government issued trailers; affordable housing projects have ground to a halt with the crash of financial markets; coastal erosion threatens the very existence of communities and destroying vital natural flood protection; tens of thousands of displaced survivors are unable to return home; and many more unable to access proper training and living wage work to lift their families out of poverty.

Speaker Pelosi, you have promised to do everything possible to rebuild the Gulf Coast. We would like to take you at your word. Your website lists the Congressional actions taken in the Gulf Coast, but the reality is that the Gulf Coast is still suffering four years after Katrina, and the injustice is happening on your watch.

Today, there is a regional and national movement to respond to the crisis and rebuild the Gulf Coast through the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act (HR 2269). The Gulf Coast Civic Works Act is based on a simple idea: Create 100,000 prevailing-wage jobs for Gulf Coast residents and displaced survivors to rebuild the public infrastructure that was damaged in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. HR 2269 is a resident-led effort that creates green jobs and training opportunities for local and displaced workers to rebuild public infrastructure and restore the environment.

Currently, the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act has 30 bi-partisan co-sponsors, along with 240 community, faith, environment, labor and student-based organizations. HR 2269 also has the support of the New Orleans City Council, the Bayou Parishes of Lafourche and Terrebonne, the Louisiana Republican Party, and the California and Missouri Democratic Parties.

Last year, on your web site, you stated that you would do everything possible to support Gulf Coast recovery. We ask you today, on the 4th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, to take two small, but powerful actions:

1. We request that you ask the five committee chairs where the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act sits to report back to your office on the bill before the Congressional winter recess;
2. We request that you sign on as a co-sponsor to the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act.

We realize that you only co-sponsor a few bills a year, but this bill is of such importance, that your signing on to HR 2269 will be a powerful symbol to other House members and to the nation about the importance of rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

We ask that you respond to our request by September 15, 2009.

In service,

Jethroe Moore
President, NAACP, Silicon Valley/San Jose

Cindy Chavez
Director, South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council

Scott Myers-Lipton
Co-Founder, Gulf Coast Civic Works Campaign

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