



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RICK PERRY
GOVERNOR

September 10, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretaries Clinton and Chu:

The recent storms that ravaged parts of South Texas raised new concerns about the safety and security of the levee system along the Rio Grande River. As a result of the federal government's failure to timely spend promised American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) funds and to maintain the Texas levee system – which prevents flooding in the event of a hurricane – thousands of lives and millions of dollars in property remain at risk. I request your attention to provide Texas with the Recovery Act funds that were promised and to work with Congress to find other funding sources necessary to protect Texans.

The central responsibility for maintenance of levees and drains throughout many areas in Texas, including the Lower Rio Grande Valley, rests with the federal International Boundaries and Water Commission (IBWC). The Recovery Act awarded \$167 million to IBWC for immediate infrastructure upgrades and rehabilitation of flood control levees in the Rio Grande Region of Texas. Yet, nearly nineteen months after the passage of the Recovery Act, only \$49 million of the \$167 million in funds has been expended – or less than 30 percent. As a result of IBWC's failure to expend funds in a timely and effective manner, the Recovery Act is not creating the jobs or results promised by President Obama.

Furthermore, over the past several years, improper maintenance of the levee system allowed erosion to pervade the integrity of the levee walls, forcing local entities to take action in the

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Page 2

absence of IBWC's fulfilling its responsibility. After repeated issues with local flooding, Hidalgo County passed a \$100 million drainage bond in 2006, including \$10 million for Rio Grande levees owned by and under the responsibility of IBWC. As the gravity of the levee situation became clear, the county redirected the rest of the bond intended for other drainage projects to rehabilitation of the levees. During the recent landfalls of Hurricane Alex and Tropical Depression 2, local entities throughout the region were forced to take emergency measures in order to protect the citizens and infrastructure of their communities. This threat should have been mitigated much sooner. Surveys of the hurricane's flood impacts have established problems with levees and drains such as boils and cracks, particularly in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. As a result, Texans and their property remain at serious risk if another storm should come ashore.

Since IBWC is not spending Recovery Act funds in a timely manner, we request that you expedite IBWC's progress or provide funds to a state agency, such as the Texas Department of Agriculture, which stands ready to administer the Rio Grande rehabilitation program on behalf of the federal government. Furthermore, as the \$167 million of Recovery Act funding is insufficient and as costs to Texans have increased as a result of IBWC inaction, I also urge you to work with Congress to provide IBWC or the State of Texas with any additional available federal stimulus funds and other funds to reimburse Texans and protect lives, crops and property along the Rio Grande in South Texas.

Repairing the levees that IBWC has failed to maintain and correcting new problems identified in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties are critical to ensure the safety of Texans. I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RICK PERRY". The letters are stylized and connected, with a prominent "R" and "P".

Rick Perry
Governor

RP:rsk