

“Two years ago one of our country’s greatest fears became a grave reality when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast. The devastation was beyond belief, in part because of the inexcusable response of the Bush administration and FEMA. The levee failure in New Orleans is a prime example of what happens when we neglect our nation’s infrastructure. That leadership void is still apparent today as thousands remain in need of housing, jobs and education.

“Now the new Congress is working to address some of the greatest needs. Since January we have approved \$6.4 billion in recovery aid and passed the Water Resources Development Act, which includes my amendment to update the Army Corps of Engineers’ Principles and Guidelines for the first time since 1983.

“New Orleans has a long road to recovery and the federal government cannot shirk its responsibility to protect its citizens and make sure they are safe, healthy and economically secure. Protecting the wetlands that are so critical to the Gulf Coast’s vulnerable environment and making sure our nation’s infrastructure is up-to-date must be our top priorities. The restoration process must include citizens in the planning and rebuilding of their communities, make the recovery process accountable and transparent, and focus on long-term prevention and mitigation.”

Congressman Blumenauer is a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Budget Committee and Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. Since coming to Congress in 1996, Blumenauer has become a leader in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. He founded the Army Corps Reform Caucus to promote better approaches to managing the nation’s water resources. His flood insurance reform legislation, the “Bunning-Bereuter-Blumenauer Flood Insurance Reform Act,” was signed into law in June, 2004.