Angered Citizens and Business Leaders Fed Up With Politics as Usual Demand January Legislative Session for Levee Reform

Dec 15, 2005, 00:00 ET from Members of the Business Council of New Orleans and The River Region
NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- Over 45 thousand signatures on
tenations from angry area citizens, as well as, letters from area business
leaders insist Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco (D-LA) and State Legislators
call a January State Legislative session to enact Levee Board reform for long
term levee safety.

"Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans was formed out of frustration at the
response to levee safety by Blanco and Louisiana Legislators," said founder,
Ruthie Frierson. "People of New Orleans are fed up," she continued. "Many
lost lives, jobs, homes and possessions. They are enraged that Louisiana
politicians are still playing games with their lives. The people are focused
on and demanding safety from future flood devastation," Frierson concluded.

"The spontaneous formation of this group organized and energized the
community," Jay Lapeyre, Chairman, The Business Council of New Orleans and The
River Region, said. "Gathering significant signatures in just two weeks
demonstrates citizens of Louisiana are no longer accepting politics as usual," he
reported. "They are rising in anger against patronage politics and special
interest deal making by the political elite."

"Business Council members and petitioners all recognize citizen safety
from flooding is top priority," said Business Council Member, Tom Oreck,
President and CEO of The Oreck Corporation.

"Conversations with members of our Congressional delegation, members of
Congress from other states and coverage in the national press confirm that
Louisiana needs to send an immediate, powerful and unequivocal signal that
politics-as-usual is over in Louisiana," Oreck said.

The Times-Picayune reported that CEOs of significant businesses are
"waiting on news about levee protection" before deciding whether to return to
the city.

"Many of Louisiana's citizens and companies relocated out of state. If
they are not convinced the city is safe from further preventable devastation
by flooding, they simply will not return to Greater New Orleans and others
will not remain," Oreck said. "Those long term decisions are being made now,
"he reported.

"The risk of New Orleans' economic collapse is real. It will continue to
increase if levee reform is delayed," Lapeyre cautioned. "It's simple: fix the
levees, fix city services, clarify the rules and the people and business will
follow," he said.

"Clearly the system did not provide adequate protection," said Business
Council member, Richard Bachmann, Chairman and CEO of Energy Partners, Ltd.
"The Governor and Legislators need to take decisive action to prove to
citizens and businesses they should return or stay," he continued, "In
addition they must demonstrate to the Federal Government that necessary
funding will be spent appropriately."

"Louisiana is viewed skeptically by Congress and the nation," according to
Lapeyre. "True Levee Board reform is a litmus test of whether Louisiana can
be trusted to meet the challenges of rebuilding and put Federal funds to work,
not to politics," he said. "This is not just a local problem," Laperye noted.
"It affects the entire country. The nation cannot afford another preventable
disaster of this magnitude."

According to Lapeyre, Louisiana is a primary source of the Nation's crude
oil, natural gas and energy production, as well as, refining petroleum for
consumer use as gasoline.

Following is the complete text of the letter sent to Governor Blanco and
State Legislators as signed by The Business Council of New Orleans and The
River Region and Jefferson Parish Business Council members.

Dear Governor Blanco and State Legislators:

It is imperative that we have an immediate and public commitment to a
Special Legislative Session in January. Press reports and House Speaker
Salter's recent comments have caused grave and increasing concern.
Governor, you confirmed in your announcement Saturday, that we need to
consolidate levee safety across districts, end the patronage, put experts in
charge, and provide professional management focused on levee safety.
Protecting the lives and property of our citizens must be this State's
highest priority.

Louisiana is viewed skeptically by Congress and the nation, and true levee
board reform has become a litmus test of whether Louisiana can be trusted to
meet the challenges of rebuilding. If we fail this test, we'll not receive
the support needed to revitalize our communities.

Conversations with members of our Congressional delegation, members of
Congress from other states, and coverage in the national press confirm that
Louisiana needs to send an immediate, powerful, and unequivocal signal that
politics-as-usual is over in Louisiana.

The citizens of Greater New Orleans strongly believe we need a January
session and need to enact these reforms immediately. Citizens For 1Greater New
Orleans consists of concerned citizens across our region. They came together
spontaneously. In two weeks, they collected over 45,000 signed
petitions demanding both a Special Session in January and levee board
reform now. http://www.citizensfor1greaterneworleans.com

These petitioners all recognize that citizen safety from flooding is our
top priority. The Times-Picayune reported that CEOs of Tidewater and other
significant businesses, are "waiting on news about levee protection" before
deciding whether to return to the city. The risk of economic collapse of New
Orleans is real, and it will continue to increase if levee reform is delayed.
As experienced leaders, you know the difference between expressions from
the grassroots that are drummed up artificially and the real thing. Over 45,000 petition signatures reflects the genuine and intense anger and frustration citizens in our region feel at the failure of our levee board to exercise competent, credible leadership in managing our levees, and outrage that the Legislature failed to take decisive action in the last Special Session.

Politics-as-usual won’t work.
It is imperative that we have immediate commitment to hold a special session in January and enact these reforms; your public support for both of these actions is vital.

Respectfully,


Jay Lapeyre
Chairman, New Orleans Business Council
President, Laitram, LLC

Cocie Rathborne
Chairman, Jefferson Business Council
CEO, Rathborne Land Company

Adler II, Coleman E.
Owner & C.E.O.
Coleman E. Adler & Sons, Inc.

Bachmann, Richard A.
Chairman, President & C.E.O.
Energy Partners, Ltd.

Besthoff III, Sydney
Chief Executive Officer
Property Management Group

Boh, Robert S. (Bob)
President & C.E.O.
Boh Brothers Construction Co., Inc.

Bollinger, Donald T. (Boysie)
Chairman & C.E.O.
Bollinger Machine Shop & Shipyard, Inc.

Boydstun, J. Herbert
President & C.E.O.
Hibernia National Bank

Hoefer, Karl
President & C.E.O.
IBERIABANK

Byrd, Marshall D.
Vice President & General Manager
Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company

Casbon, John N.
C.E.O., Southeast Region
First American Title Insurance Co.

Coleman, Thomas B. (Tommy)
Managing Partner & C.E.O.
International Matex Tank Terminals

Cowen, Dr. Scott S.
President
Tulane University

Diefenthal, Edward L. (Ned)
Vice Chairman & C.E.O.
Southern Holdings, Inc.

Drennan, Mark
GNO, Inc.

Forman, L. Ronald (Ron)
President & C.E.O.
Audubon Nature Institute

Fowler, Hardy B.
Office Managing Partner
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Georges, John D.
Chief Executive Officer
Imperial Trading Co., Inc.

Glaviano Sr., Frank A.
Vice President Production Americas
Shell Energy Resources Company

Goldring, William (Bill)
Chairman
Magnolia Marketing Company

Guidry, David
Guico Machine Works

Hall, Terence E.
Chairman, President & C.E.O.
Superior Energy Services, Inc.

Hudson, Jim
President
Omni Bank

Johnson, E. Douglas
Johnson & Rice Co.

Kallenborn, John J.
President – New Orleans Region
JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA

Kerstein, David A.
Chief Executive Officer
Estate of William G. Helis, A Partnership

Koerner III, John E.
President
Koerner Capital, L.L.C.

Lagarde III, Maurice Leonard
President
HCA-Delta Division

Lane III, H. Merritt
President & C.E.O.
Canal Barge Co., Inc.

LeBlanc, Pat
LeBlanc, Tusa and Butler

Mayer, Mark A.
President
Peter A. Mayer Advertising Inc.

MCMCII, L. Richards (Rick)
Chairman
Mechanical Equipment Company, Inc.

Metcalfe Jr., William M.
Chief Executive Officer
MCMedia, LLC

Oreck, Thomas A.
President & C.E.O.
Oreck Corporation

Packer, Dan
President & C.E.O.
Entergy - New Orleans

Parker, Jefferson G.
President
Howard Weil, Inc.

Reiss Jr., James J. (Jimmy)
President & C.E.O.
Reiss Companies, LLC

Romig, Steve
LaPort, Sehrt, Romig and Hand

Rusovich, Gregory R.
President & C.E.O.
Transoceanic Shipping Company, Inc.

Shane, Henry
Favrot and Shane

Solomon, Gary N.
Chairman & C.E.O.
Crescent Bank & Trust

Stewart Jr., Frank B.
Chairman of Board
Stewart Capital, LLC

Stumpf, Jack
Jack Stumpf and Assoc

Suquet, Jose' S.
President & C.E.O.
Pan American Life Insurance Company

Taylor, Dean E.
President & C.E.O.
Tidewater, Inc.

Taylor, Phyllis
Chairman and CEO
Taylor Energy Co.

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