Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 27, 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We urge you to immediately rescind your decision to suspend the Davis-Bacon Act in the affected areas of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida because of the disastrous consequences this action will have on the local economy and the economic prospects for area workers and their families. This Proclamation will further harm an area seeking to recover from the catastrophic Hurricane Katrina.

As you know, the Davis-Bacon law requires federal contractors to pay its workers at least the prevailing wage on construction projects, including highways, buildings, and bridges. In the Gulf region, this often amounts to as little as $9 per hour, representing one of the lowest prevailing wage rates in the country. The individuals who lost their homes and jobs as a result of the hurricane need and deserve every chance at a secure future. Surely, $9 per hour is not too high a wage to pay to impoverished people who have lost everything, especially workers who will have to clean up areas rife with E coli bacteria, toxic molds, and other unknown contaminants.

Undermining this basic worker protection law serves to further economically depress a region that has been devastated by natural destruction. Prevailing wages ensure that workers can afford the rising price of gas as well as the increasing costs of health care, food, tuition, and other essentials.

Waiving the Davis-Bacon protections also encourages contractors to take advantage of desperation, ultimately compromising the work quality on all construction projects. The law is designed to prevent the government and local communities from being exploited by out-of-state substandard contractors. It also serves to hold contractors accountable for work performed. Waiving the law sets a dangerous precedent for future government work in the wake of natural disasters.

Undoubtedly, the people of the Gulf region who will be displaced for weeks, and perhaps for several years, deserve to return to home towns with secure and safe infrastructure. The local workers themselves deserve the kind of fair wage rates that will lift up their circumstances and provide hope. To deprive a worker who has already struggled in this region of Davis-Bacon wage rates is to victimize him or her a second time.

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In your address last Thursday, you pledged, "the government of this nation will do its part" to help those in the region. Suspending Davis-Bacon reverses that promise to the workers so devastated by this crisis. In an area afflicted with poverty and with so many workers struggling to care for their families, waiving this basic worker protection is a major step in the wrong direction. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to reverse this harmful Proclamation.

Sincerely,

Michael H. Michaud Linda T. Sánchez

Jed Strickland

Mike Doyle Anna Eshoo Mark A. Brady

Joe Baca Tim Ryan Pete Stark

Carolyn McCarthy Kendrick B. Meek Jim McDermott

Brad Sherman Sam Farr Tammy Baldwin

Raúl M. Grijalva

Emanuel Cleaver Mike Honda Lois Capps

Lowry Moran | Edward J. Manley | Elijah E. Cummings

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Jim Oberstar | George Miller | Martin Olav Sabo

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John F. Tierney | Betty McCollum | Hilda L. Solis

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Zoe Lofgren | Julia Carson | Tom Allen

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Jim McGovern | Eddie Bernice Johnson | Tom Holden

Steve Israel | Henry Cuellar | Pearl Oberstar

Jim Ott | Neil Abercrombie | John Conyers Jr.

John B. Larson | Jim Van Hollen | Sam Ryan

Stephanie Tubbs Jones | Loretta Sanchez | Jerrold Nadler

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Joe Schwartz | John W. Olver | Gene Green

Lee V. Cutcher | Robert Menendez | Alcee L. Hastings

Rosa L. DeLauro | Mary Meehan | Charles J. Melurnon

Henry A. Waxman | Ed Bass | Diane E. Watson

Joe Shelton | Peter DeFazio | _____

Lane Evans | Joe E. Skinner | _____

Marie Berry | Shelley Berkley | _____

Steven R. Rothman | Harold Ford | _____

Ben Cardin | _____ | _____

Bobby Scott | _____ | _____

Robert Ash | _____ | _____

Juanita Millender-McDonald | _____ | _____

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