Gov. Perry Comments on Hurricane Ike Damage

Visits San Antonio shelter and EOCs in Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

I came here today to spend some time with the people whose lives have been changed by Hurricane Ike.

More than a week has passed since that powerful storm slammed into our state and Texans have been working 'round the clock on the process of rescue, restoration and re-entry.

I can't tell you how proud I am of the way our state has responded to this situation, from officials at the local level who met one challenge after another, to our statewide team who supported them, to people who have been helping their neighbors in tough situations.

We are now well into the recovery phase, that part of our process that involves taking stock of what we've lost, getting help to those who need it, and figuring out what it will take to rebuild.

What we do know is that Ike devastated an area of Texas that is roughly the size of West Virginia, crushing houses and businesses, destroying wildlife habitat, and chasing thousands of people from their homes.

Many of those people have yet to return home, some living in FEMA-funded hotels, others with friends and still others in shelters. After peaking at more than 42,000 people in our statewide shelter network, I am pleased to say that there are currently less than 14,000 people residing in our shelters.

We are working to connect displaced Texans with the aid that is available to them through FEMA. These aid dollars can provide

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temporary housing and assistance in rebuilding, but we know that much of what Texans lost can never be replaced.

However, we are aggressively pressing for our fair share of federal aid. Today, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst is in Washington at my request to present our case to a Congressional subcommittee. In his testimony, he will provide an overview of our state’s remarkable effort and share preliminary estimates of damage.

He will also ask for what you might call a down-payment, a first wave of funding on the order of $10 billion to get the wheels of our recovery turning. I suspect that dollar amount is just the beginning, but we will do what we can to connect Texans with the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

Once again, I want to express my appreciation for our local leaders and their stellar effort in the face of incredible odds. You have done our state proud with your hard work, your wise decisions and your enduring regard for your fellow Texans.

You remind us all of what it means to be a Texan.