Gov. Perry Announces HUD Disaster Housing Assistance Program

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

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

It’s great to be here in Harris County, to spend time with a group of people who have so boldly handled the effects of Hurricane Ike. Here in this room are many of the leaders who have worked their fingers to the bone on the process of rescue, re-entry and, now, recovery. I came here to look them in the eye and thank them for their hard work.

I’m talking about local leaders like Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, and State Representatives like Gary Elkins, Wayne Smith and Jim Murphy. These folks and the members of the remarkable team here in Harris County embody the Texas values of hard work, leadership and, most of all, neighbors looking out for neighbors.

I am proud to be here with all of you today and carry with me the thanks and admiration of our state.

As I have worked my way around Texas over the last week, visiting with local leaders, and spending time with Texans whose lives were turned upside down by Hurricane Ike, I have seen constant reminders of this storm’s destructive power.

Across an area of devastation the size of West Virginia, I’ve seen flooded pastures, toppled trees and far too many shattered houses—at last count, more than 100,000 housing units have been damaged or destroyed.

Right now, there are still nearly 6,000 Texans living in shelters, away from their homes, jobs, schools and churches. Getting those people back home, under a roof they can call their
own, is a guiding priority for everyone here today.

That is why we established a Joint State-Federal Housing Task Force last week, a team that is working through all the federal options that are available for our citizens. That is why we are here today...to discuss the latest action in an ongoing team effort between local officials, the state of Texas and key federal agencies.

Last Friday, I directed Mike Gerber, executive director of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, to work with his federal counterparts to get assistance for our displaced neighbors. In just five days, we got a great response, which will mean another step toward self-sufficiency for thousands of Texans affected by Ike.

Today, I have the pleasure of introducing one of our federal partners who has responded quickly and effectively to our request to assist our citizens.

I’d like to give a warm Texas welcome to Steve Preston, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, who has good news for the people displaced by Hurricane Ike.

Mr. Secretary?

[PRESTON SPEAKS then introduces HARVEY JOHNSON]

[JOHNSON speaks]

Thank you, Admiral [Harvey Johnson] and thanks to your folks at FEMA for their ongoing efforts to help Texas recover from Ike. You can be sure that we will continue to press for the maximum amount of federal assistance as we all work to get Texans back on their feet as quickly as possible. This Housing Assistance Program is an essential step in that process.