



TREASURER OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

JOHN NEELY KENNEDY
TREASURER

September 7, 2016

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Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

RE: Inmate Labor

Dear Governor Edwards:

I write to strongly urge you to direct the Louisiana Department of Corrections to maximize the use of inmate labor to assist in the recovery, remediation, and repair of damage caused by the recent flooding.

Existing state law either already authorizes or grants you the authority to issue executive orders authorizing these activities. I encourage you to do this as a cost-effective means to maximize our public resources during the recovery to repair and remediate our public facilities and help our citizens whose homes have been uninhabitable. I wish to draw your attention specifically to La. R.S. 15:833.1 which authorizes the use of inmate labor for remediation activities following a disaster exactly like the one we just experienced. Inmates could be used to supplement the Shelter at Home program by performing the labor intensive tasks – at a much lower cost – of removing dry wall, soaked carpet, etc. and allowing the private contractors to perform the more skilled tasks. This would have the added benefit of being able to provide more assistance to our citizens who need it most.

As you are well aware, our great State has been severely impacted by two unprecedented flood events this year, resulting in a total of fifty-six of our sixty-four parishes receiving federal major disaster declarations (plus seven parishes unfortunately impacted by both events). While the state and local governments are still assessing the financial impact caused by the August flooding, the bill will undoubtedly be high. Use of inmate labor is authorized by the Legislature when the governor determines it is appropriate and in furtherance of the rehabilitation and training of inmates.

This fiscally prudent measure is available to the state and local governments and should be used to the full extent legally authorized to help the state and local governments recover from this widespread flooding and reestablish normal operations

Governor Edwards
September 7, 2016
Page 2

and services. There is also precedent from previous disasters of inmates contributing response and recovery assistance, going back to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Local governments appear to have borne the brunt of flood damage; the Department of Corrections should coordinate these efforts with the sheriff in each impacted parish.

The state will save money by using inmates to repair and restore public property that received damage from the flooding, and I urge you to issue the necessary executive orders to allow this to occur. For your convenience, I have enclosed copies of the statutes (La. R.S. 15:708, 832, 832.1, and 833.1) that authorize the use of state and parish inmate labor for specified activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Kennedy
State Treasurer

JNK/te/dtm

cc: James LeBlanc, Secretary, Dept. of Corrections
Mike Ranatza, Executive Director, LA Sheriffs Association

Enclosures