

In his January speech to New Orleans residents, President-elect Obama promised to revamp the Office for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding, ensuring that the Recovery Coordinator answer directly to the President. Below is a draft executive order that will fulfill that promise.

Executive Order XXX – Establishment of a new Office for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101 et seq.) and the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5121-5206) (the "Stafford Act"), and to further strengthen Federal support for the just, equitable and complete recovery and rebuilding of Gulf Coast region affected by the Hurricanes of 2005 and 2008, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Sec. 1. Policy. To guarantee a just, equitable and complete recovery from the Hurricanes of 2005 and 2008 it is the policy of the Federal Government to provide effective, integrated, and responsive assistance from across the Federal Government to support State, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, non-profit organizations and faith-based and other community humanitarian relief organizations in the recovery and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast region.

Sec. 2. Establishment of the Office for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding. There is established within the Executive Office of the President an Office for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding that will have lead responsibility in the executive branch to establish policies, priorities, and objectives for the Federal Government's comprehensive effort to assist the Gulf Coast in fully recovering from the 2005 and 2008 hurricanes.

Sec. 3. Establishment of Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding Advisor. The Advisor for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding (Advisor) shall be selected by the President and shall be appointed by and report directly to the President. The President shall make available to the Advisor such personnel, funds, and other resources as may be appropriate to enable the Advisor to carry out the Advisor's mission

Sec. 4. Mission and Functions of Advisor. –

(a) The Advisor's mission shall be to ensure a just, complete and equitable recovery from the 2005 and 2008 hurricanes. The Advisor shall be mandated to pay close attention to the recovery needs and rights of vulnerable populations, including low-income people, people of color, immigrants, the disabled, and the elderly. The Advisor shall work with executive departments and agencies to ensure the proper implementation of the policy set forth in section 1 of this order by coordinating the Federal recovery and rebuilding efforts. The Advisor shall be the principal point of contact for the President and his senior advisors with respect to the Federal

recovery and rebuilding. The Advisor shall be consulted by the Secretary of Homeland Security in the event of any future disaster in the Gulf Coast

(b) The Advisor shall serve as the primary point of contact within the executive branch with the Congress, State and local governments, the private sector, and community leaders regarding the President's commitment to a just and complete recovery. Working with the input of all appropriate heads of executive departments and agencies, the Advisor shall be responsible for managing information flow, requests for actions, and discussions regarding the recovery.

(c) The Advisor shall have the authority to, when appropriate, require State and Federal agencies to have more flexible interpretations of their authorizing laws in order to facilitate cooperation and coordination across agencies.

(d) The Advisor shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a transparent data repository accessible to the general public on all sources of recovery and rebuilding dollars flowing to various federal agencies. Information collected should provide data on how rebuilding dollars are benefiting vulnerable populations.

(e) The Advisor shall, in order to make the Advisor more effective and responsive to the needs and rights of the people of the Gulf Coast, appoint a Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding Council (Council).

(i) The Council shall be comprised of 20 people. Three people from each Gulf Coast state (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas) shall sit on the Council. In addition, each state shall select one State government official to be part of the Council. The remaining two slots shall be filled by community leaders and Gulf Coast recovery advocates. The Council shall have gender, age, ethnic and racial diversity reflective of the Gulf Coast communities affected by the storms, and shall have diverse experience and knowledge representative of all the issues related to complete recovery including, but not limited to: housing, economic development, worker and immigrant rights, infrastructure, social services, levee protection and coastal restoration. Council members shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in order to remove barriers to participation.

(ii) The Council shall be directed to meet monthly in alternating locations along the Gulf Coast. The purpose of the Council meetings shall be to examine and devise concrete recommendations for federal action on the current state of Gulf Coast recovery and rebuilding along the coast, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, including low-income people, people of color, immigrants, the disabled, and the elderly.

(iii) The Advisor shall allocate necessary funds, technical assistance and staff necessary to support the work of the Council as well as ensuring the Council has access to information and government personnel to inform the work of the Council.

(iv) The Advisor shall meet with the Council quarterly to hear its recommendations.

(f) The Advisor shall meet with the President quarterly, after meeting with the Council, to present recommendations for action. Following meetings with the President, the Advisor shall issue to the Council a written summary of concrete policy decisions and actions to be taken for the upcoming quarter.

(g) The Advisor shall, at some point in her/his tenure, report on observed and learned failings in the existing disaster response system and propose legislative and/or administrative corrections.

(h) The Coordinator shall have a satellite office in the Gulf Coast.

Sec. 5. Duties of Heads of Departments and Agencies. Heads of executive departments and agencies shall respond promptly to any request by the Advisor, and shall, consistent with applicable law, provide such information as the Advisor deems necessary to carry out the Advisor's mission, and shall otherwise cooperate with the Advisor to the greatest extent practicable to facilitate the performance of the Advisor's mission.

Sec. 6. Termination. The Office for Gulf Coast Recovery and Rebuilding shall terminate 4 years from the date of this order.