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Delegation pushes Congress for La. aid

- By [GERARD SHIELDS](#)
- Advocate Washington bureau
- Published: Sep 18, 2008 - Page: 4A - UPDATED: 12:05 a.m.

[Comments \(0\)](#)

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she hopes to have the relief ready before Congress adjourns for its election recess at the end of next week. If not, Louisiana delegation members say, their earliest hope for help will be a lame duck session in November.

Louisiana House members are asking for aid on issues ranging from the state's damaged fisheries to tax credits for homeowners who had to pay high deductibles for disaster insurance.

Jindal sent a letter to congressional leaders over the weekend that requested help in six areas. Jindal, a former congressman, wants the federal government to provide full assistance to those affected by hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

He is asking President Bush to waive a \$100 million federal ceiling on funding for damaged bridges and roads. The governor wants another \$100 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for repair to other infrastructure and public facilities.

Aid to the state's agricultural and fishing industries also is necessary, as is \$100 million for police support and equipment and up to \$302 million for losses to the state's health-care community, Jindal said.

U.S. Rep. Charles "Charlie" Melancon, D-Napoleonville, is leading the charge for the funding in the House. Melancon worries that Congress may not have enough time to put together a full emergency supplemental spending bill.

"It may be difficult to cobble together a complete supplemental," Melancon said. "The leadership has at least listened."

The relief could be included in other measures winding through Congress.

U.S. Rep. Don Cazayoux, D-New Roads, is pushing for tax credits to homeowners who had higher insurance deductibles because the hurricanes were named storms. Cazayoux and Melancon also want the federal government to allow trees that fell on private property to be included in federal debris removal costs.

“The oak trees in south Louisiana suffered big time, and they’re everywhere,” Melancon said.

U.S. Rep. Charles Boustany, R-Lafayette, said the Louisiana delegation will work with colleagues from other affected states such as Texas to push for the relief. The aid request also is expected to include money for recovery from the Midwest floods and California wildfires.

Louisiana delegation members, including Boustany, met this week with Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Mike Strain and Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu to discuss agriculture recovery needs.

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez on Wednesday declared a commercial fishery failure in Louisiana, which will make federal aid available to the state.

Even if a relief measure is not passed before Congress leaves for recess, U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, said a lame duck session isn’t out of the question.

“Ever since I’ve been here over six years, we’ve always come back for a lame duck session,” Alexander said.

Find this article at:

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/28590954.html?showAll=y&c=y>

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