

Urge Representatives to pass hurricane grant bill

By Cornelia Banks Joe Compian and Laura Murrell | Posted: Saturday, November 13, 2010 11:00 pm

Right after Hurricane Ike in September 2008 Congress allocated \$600 million in Social Services Block Grant funds to help families recover from hurricanes Ike and Dolly and the Midwest floods.

It took until January 2010 for about \$90 million of those funds to finally become available to social services organizations in the Houston-Galveston area to help families.

In Galveston and Brazoria counties an unprecedented collaboration of social service agencies facilitated by Gulf Coast Interfaith and the United Way (Galveston and of the Gulf Coast Mainland) secured about \$35 million of that funding for our community.

Lead agencies such as the University of Texas Medical Branch The Gulf Coast Center Catholic Charities and Lutheran Disaster Response coordinated contracts and services with smaller agencies such as Gleanings from the Harvest and The Jesse Tree to help families move along the path to recovery.

They had outstanding results. During those nine months more than 16000 individuals in the Houston-Galveston region received help replacing lost furniture and appliances reconnecting utilities and addressing other basic unmet needs like identification documents and birth certificates.

More than 6000 people received important mental health counseling or substance abuse treatment for issues arising from or made worse by the long-term aftermath of Ike.

More than 400 families in the region had new roofs and minor repairs completed regardless of their income at the same time only a handful of homes have been repaired or replaced by CDGB funds.

On Sept. 30 this great progress came to an abrupt stop when two members the U.S. House of Representatives failed to join their fellow 433 representatives to pass a Social Services Block Grant extension bill offered by Sen. John Cornyn and unanimously passed by the U.S. Senate.

Expressing his disappointment that the House failed to pass SB 3774 extending funding for one year without adding to the federal deficit U.S. Rep. Pete Olson stated: "The Houston delegation was united in addressing the needs of Ike victims and I am appalled that any member would oppose addressing what is a minor issue for Congress but a major issue for those still recovering from Hurricane Ike. Rest assured that I will work with my colleagues to address this as soon as possible to ensure that those who need this help can receive it as soon as possible."

The U.S. House of Representatives will reconvene Monday and a first order of business will be to

seek unanimous passage of Senate Bill 3774.

We need your urgent help to make this happen.

Gulf Coast Interfaith asks that you immediately call Rep. Pete Olson at 202-225-5951 and Rep. Ron Paul at 202-225-2831 and ask them to lobby their House colleagues to unanimously pass SB 3774.

Help us save jobs and empower people

Finally please sign our online petition today and ask your family and friends to sign by going to www.RallyCongress.comExtend-Hurricane-Ike-SSBG-Funding3668.

Cornelia Banks Joe Compian and Laura Murrell and leaders in Gulf Coast Interfaith.