



## TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

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### PRESS RELEASE

## Cmr. George P. Bush calls on Texas Congressional Delegation to support request for mitigation funding flexibility to improve recovery efforts

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AUSTIN — Today Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush announced he sent a letter to the Texas Congressional Delegation requesting support for his request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for greater flexibility in the rules governing \$4.383 billion in Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) allocation for mitigation.

"We must be bold in our efforts to recover responsibly," said Commissioner Bush. "Innovation, preparedness and mitigation are the best remedies to address the threats posed by natural disasters. These recommendations will not only help the residents of the Texas coast, but will reduce future federal costs. I encourage those who want a fiscally conservative and smart approach to disaster recovery to express your support for these requests to Secretary Carson and HUD, who can make these sensible recommendations become a reality."

Commissioner Bush petitioned HUD for maximum flexibility which includes several waivers and rules in the upcoming publication of the Federal Register governing the next \$4.383 billion CDBG-DR funds coming to Texas. These requests include removing the need for a "tie-back" to a specific event allowing local officials to determine the most effective uses of mitigation funds to protect the whole region from future events.

Commissioner Bush also asked HUD to create a new national objective and eligible activity that is mitigation specific. Currently CDBG-DR funds must meet one of three national objectives as defined by HUD, which are:

1. Aiding in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight,
2. Benefiting low- and moderate-income persons, or
3. Meeting an urgent community need.

The recommendations in Commissioner Bush's request also included removing any need to obligate funds to most impacted areas since areas that are upstream of flooding conditions may not be in most impacted areas but can have drastic impacts on mitigating future flooding. Commissioner Bush also requested that HUD provide a single allocation for all three eligible flooding events in Texas rather than proportioning it by 2015, 2016 and Harvey. Additional recommendations address allowing greater flexibility on grant requirements to allow local communities to develop a more comprehensive plan for recovery.

"While it can never be fast enough, through the hard work and diligence of our staff, Texans are returning to their homes and our communities are beginning the recovery process more quickly than in any other major disaster in modern U.S. history," said Commissioner Bush. "Our work does not stop here. Now we must prioritize mitigation to prevent and minimize future hurricane and storm damage - it is the fiscally conservative thing to do. Unfortunately, federal bureaucracy remains bound by irregular or archaic rules."

Hurricane Harvey was a historical storm in terms of property damage and disruption to the lives of Texans in the impacted area. The most economically destructive hurricane to hit Texas, with damage estimated at \$120 billion, Hurricane Harvey was also the second most destructive in American history. Despite federal funding and private donations, the Texas General Land Office (GLO) estimates there is still an unmet need of \$110 billion dollars.

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