

News Release

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA Disaster Loan Approvals Surpass \$4.1 Billion in Louisiana *Filing Deadline for Disaster Loan Assistance Extended to April 10, 2006*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration today announced that disaster loan approvals have surpassed \$4.1 billion in Louisiana and have topped \$6.5 billion in affected areas throughout the Gulf region, a record for the agency.

In the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana continues to lead the way in disaster assistance with loan approvals totaling \$4.19 billion to 58,100 individuals. This includes 48,500 home loan approvals for \$3.3 billion and 9,600 business loan approvals for \$880 million. In the history of the agency, no other disaster has initiated giving more money to a single state. Throughout the Gulf Region, 94,000 disaster loan applications have been approved for \$6.5 billion.

“It is now almost seven months since these hurricanes tore through the Gulf region and we continue to see a steady increase in the number of SBA disaster loan applications being submitted,” said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. “People down there still need help – a lot of help. Our work along the Gulf Coast is not done and we are committed to staying on the job until it is complete.”

“Restoring an economy in the aftermath of any major disaster is a daunting task,” said SBA Louisiana District Director Eugene Cornelius. “These numbers reflect the tenacity and eagerness of Louisiana’s citizenry to rebuild.”

Last week, SBA released a Request for Information (RFI) soliciting input from interested parties on how the private sector can best support the delivery of SBA’s Disaster Assistance program, within its current operational framework and/or within a guaranteed lending framework. In order to prepare for future disasters, and to ensure that the disaster program is operating at its highest potential, SBA seeks ideas and options for complementing the agency’s existing resources. The comment period will last for 45 days. All responses must be received by 5:00 pm EST on May 2, 2006. Complete details available on the Fed Biz Ops Web site at

<http://www.fbo.gov/spg/SBA/OOA/OPGM/SBAHQ%2D06%2DI%2D0001/SynopsisR.html>.

Earlier this month, SBA and the Gulf Coast Rebuilding Office announced the *Disaster Loan Partners Initiative*, an innovative initiative designed to increase the role of private sector financial institutions in the hurricane recovery efforts throughout the Gulf region. SBA is in the process of soliciting bids from local banks and other entities to assist in loan processing and closing functions through the current disaster loan program. The contract is designed to complement the loan processing currently under way by SBA’s Office of Disaster Assistance and field offices throughout the country as a result of last year’s devastating hurricanes affecting the Gulf Coast. For more information, visit the Fed Biz Ops website at <http://www.fbo.gov/spg/SBA/OOA/OPGM/SBAHQ%2D06%2DQ%2D0004/listing.html>.

Applicants may check the status of their SBA disaster loan applications by calling 1-800-659-2955 or e-mailing SBA at disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.