

TAYLOR ANNOUNCES NO MONEY IN PRESIDENT'S BUDGET FOR MANDATORY BUYOUTS

Assistant Secretary states that no funding for buyouts will be available in 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Gene Taylor today announced that there is no money for the mandatory buyout of properties that were either destroyed or damaged in Hurricane Katrina in President Bush's federal budget request for 2009, which spans from Oct. 1, 2008 to Sept. 30, 2009.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment held a hearing on Feb. 7 on agency budgets and priorities for fiscal year 2009. At the hearing, Rep. Taylor asked Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works John Paul Woodley, Jr. if there is money in the budget request specifically for mandatory buyouts. Woodley responded, "I don't know of any money in the president's budget for that purpose." Woodley also said at the hearing that he would put into writing, upon Rep. Taylor's request, that there would be no mandatory buyouts in 2009.

The Corps of Engineers' study of comprehensive improvements for the Mississippi coast was supposed to be presented to Congress by Dec. 31, but it still has not been received. Because of this, no funding has been requested for items in the study, which would include projects such as coastal restoration, barrier islands restoration and flood damage reduction.

Woodley sent Rep. Taylor a letter in January in which he noted that the non-structural alternatives being evaluated by the Corps of Engineers to provide reduction of risk from future storms would be voluntary.

"It is my understanding that a strictly voluntary non-structural plan, including elevation of structures, buyouts and/or relocations, is one of the alternatives being evaluated as part of the study process," Woodley stated in the letter.

"I am glad to finally get the record straight that there will not be any funding for mandatory buyouts in 2009," Rep. Taylor said. "I look forward to the release of the Corps of Engineers' final study for coastal improvements."