

# PRESS RELEASE

## **Comr. George P. Bush sends letter cosigned by 60+ Texas leaders to President Trump advocating for coastal barrier**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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AUSTIN — Download a scanned copy of the letter [here](#)

AUSTIN - On Monday, Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush sent a letter to President Donald J. Trump urging the inclusion of a coastal barrier system for the Houston/Galveston bay area in his national infrastructure plans. The letter is cosigned by more than 60 Texas leaders including members of the Texas Legislature, 21 coastal mayors, six county judges, and more than two dozen member of the business and education communities.

"The Texas coast possesses an extensive port system that is crucial not only to the United States' economy but also to our national security," wrote Commissioner Bush. "Building the proposed coastal barrier system is a historic opportunity to safeguard our nation's economy, our national security and millions of citizens' lives and livelihood."

The letter states the key component of the Texas coast is the Houston and Galveston bay area, which is responsible for 428 million tons of cargo annually. The region is comprised of six counties from Freeport to the eastern border of the state. The vast, complex area is home to the Port of Houston, the country's second busiest port, providing more than \$600 billion a year in direct output to the U.S. economy; the Port of Beaumont, the country's fourth largest port, handling more military cargo than any other port in the U.S.; and Freeport, which is home to the nation's largest Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The area is responsible for more than half of the country's jet fuel, is home to 29% of the country's oil-refining capacity and is the number one supplier of energy products (aviation fuel, gas, etc.) to the U.S. military.

The Houston and Galveston bay area produces more than 3 million direct and indirect jobs nationwide, yet remains largely unprotected from storm surge nearly a decade after Hurricane Ike devastated the upper coast of Texas, killing 74 people and causing \$29.5 billion in damages. The deadly storm was the third most devastating hurricane in U.S. history, which missed the Port of Houston; however, a direct hit from the hurricane would have resulted in more than \$100 billion in damages. The coastal barrier system proposed would be built to a 100-year event standard, and modeling has concluded that it would have prevented 87% of the damages incurred by Hurricane Ike.

"Hurricane Ike was a large Category 2 hurricane that changed course at the last minute thus avoiding a direct hit to the Port of Houston," Commissioner Bush wrote. "That was nearly 10 years ago, and little has been done to protect the area's critical infrastructure.

Should the Houston and Galveston bay area sustain a similar or even larger storm, the economic damages to the state and the country would be catastrophic."

The coastal barrier system will require \$15 billion in federal funds to protect the vital area. Commissioner Bush explains that the GLO and local leaders are currently working with the Texas Legislature to ensure financial support for the operations and maintenance cost for the coastal barrier system. Since taking office, Commissioner Bush has spent the past two years building support for this protection system among the Texas Congressional delegation, members of the Texas Legislature, local officials, industry and in the communities. The Texas General Land Office is currently working with the Army Corps of Engineers on the development of a barrier system for the region as well as other large-scale projects across the Texas coast.

Letter Cosigners:

Dr. William J. Merrell, Texas A&M Galveston, Ike Dike Founder

Bob Mitchell, President, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership

Robert Eckels, President, Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District

Dr. Samuel D. Brody, Director, Center for Texas Beaches and Shores

Bob Harvey, President & CEO, Greater Houston Partnership

Vicki Fullerton, Chairman of the Board, Texas Association of Realtors

Hector Rivero, President & CEO, Texas Chemical Council

Scott Joslove, President & CEO, Texas Hotel & Lodging Association

Todd Staples, President, Texas Oil and Gas Association

Earl Shipp, Vice President of Gulf Coast Operations, Dow Chemical

James F. Thompson, Chief Executive, Global Programs, AECOM

James D. Dannenbaum, President & CEO, Dannenbaum Engineering

William L. Raba, President, Raba Kistner

David C. Fisher, Director & CEO, Port of Beaumont

Floyd Gaspard, Port Director, Port of Port Arthur

L.M. "Matt" Sebesta, Jr., County Judge, Brazoria County

Jimmy Sylvia, County Judge, Chambers County

Mark Henry, County Judge, Galveston County

Ed Emmett, County Judge, Harris County

Jeff Branick, County Judge, Jefferson County

Stephen Brint Carlton, County Judge, Orange County

Sylvia Garcia, State Senator, District 6

Larry Taylor, State Senator, District 11

Dr. Greg Bonnen, State Representative, District 24

John P. Cyrier, State Representative, District 17

Joe Deshotel, State Representative, District 22

Wayne Faircloth, State Representative, District 23

Dennis Paul, State Representative, District 129

Dade Phelan, State Representative, District 21  
Theresa Rodriguez, President, Bay Area Houston Transportation Partnership  
Mike Shields, Executive Director, Baytown / West Chambers County Economic  
Development Foundation  
Cindy H. DeWease, President & CEO, Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce  
Craig S. Beskid, Executive Director, East Harris County Manufacturers Association  
David S. Murphy, Chairman, Galveston County Economic Development Alliance  
Bobby Hocking, President, Galveston County Mayor and Council Members Association  
Jeff Sjostrom, President, Galveston Economic Development Partnership  
Joyce Calver McLean, Chair, Galveston Island Park Board of Trustees  
Gina M. Spagnola, President and CEO, Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Colleen Hicks, President, La Porte-Bayshore Chamber of Commerce  
Cheryl Sanders, Mayor, Anahuac  
Stephen DonCarlos, Mayor, Baytown  
Billy Combs, Mayor, Beach City  
Jerry Mouton, Mayor, Deer Park  
Julie Masters, Mayor, Dickinson  
Robert White, Mayor, El Lago  
Kevin M. Holland, Mayor, Friendswood  
James D. Yarbrough, Mayor, Galveston  
Sylvester Turner, Mayor, Houston  
Carl Joiner, Mayor, Kemah  
Bobby Hocking, Mayor, La Marque  
Louis R. Rigby, Mayor, La Porte  
Pat Hallisey, Mayor, League City  
Nick Dixon, Mayor, Mont Belvieu  
Michel J. Bechtel, Mayor, Morgan's Point  
Mark Denman, Mayor, Nassau Bay  
Johnny Isbell, Mayor, Pasadena  
Jeff Tambrella, Mayor, Santa Fe  
Glenn Royal, Mayor, Seabrook  
Jon Keeney, Mayor, Taylor Lake Village  
Donna Rogers, Mayor, Webster  
Greg Smith, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools, Clear Creek Independent School District  
Lloyd W. Graham, Superintendent of Schools, La Porte, Independent School District

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