



September 9, 2011

HAND DELIVERED  
The Honorable Rick Perry  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Dear Governor Perry,

Over the last week you have seen firsthand the devastation that wildfires have brought upon Central and East Texas. And, as you know, wildfires destroyed thousands of acres in West Texas earlier this year.

On March 14, 2011 you told a group of citizens in a tele-townhall hosted by Texans for Fiscal Responsibility that you would oppose tapping the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) because it is our state's piggy bank to be used in the case of a natural disaster. In 2008, when Hurricane Ike devastated the Texas coast, not one dollar was spent from the ESF to cover this cost, which amounted to \$716,935,660 in General Revenue. With the destructive cuts made to this biennium's state budget, this is no longer an option for us.

In late April, you asked President Obama to declare Texas a disaster area because of the devastating West Texas fires, and your request was approved June 1. This week, FEMA was in the state assessing the damage in Bastrop and Travis County, and thankfully, President Obama has contacted you and pledged federal assistance with the firefighting and recovery in our current Central Texas disaster.

More than once, you have taken the position that Texas does not need to rely on the federal government, yet we have done just that while we have more than \$6 billion available in the ESF. Furthermore, both Chairman Steve Ogden and Legislative Budget Board Executive Director John O'Brien have agreed that the ESF balance could "easily" exceed the Comptroller's initial estimate by almost \$3 billion.

Local fire departments and the Texas Forest Service have done an excellent job responding to this emergency and we now have emergency personnel from 48 states assisting us. That also means we have bills rapidly accruing and current appropriations to the Texas Forest Service are not sufficient to cover these costs. In addition, the Forest Service has approximately \$61.5 million in unpaid bills for the fiscal year that ended August 31, 2011, from the West Texas fires. If we wait until the Legislature next convenes in 2013, we are asking other states and local

governments to float our debt despite the fact that they too may be experiencing budget difficulties.

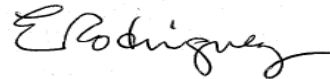
When considering the larger picture, we must also remember Hurricane Irene which recently hit the eastern seaboard. Irene is estimated to have caused up to \$7 billion in damage, and will require major attention from FEMA over the coming months. However, Senator John Cornyn and others have begun to insist that Congress offset federal relief for disasters with equal cuts in other parts of government spending. Again, how can we in good faith ask for help from others before we take the steps necessary to help ourselves?

As the Governor, you alone have the power to call a special session of the Texas Legislature for the purpose of accessing Rainy Day Fund money to battle the fires raging across Texas today and assist with the recovery efforts that will last months, if not years. We respectfully request that you issue a call immediately to help those families who have suffered great loss as a result of this disaster.

Sincerely,



Rep. Donna Howard  
House District 48



Rep. Eddie Rodriguez  
House District 51



Rep. Alma Allen



Rep. Carol Alvarado



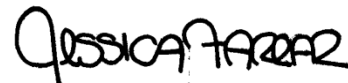
Rep. Lon Burnam



Rep. Dawnna Dukes



Rep. Joe Farias



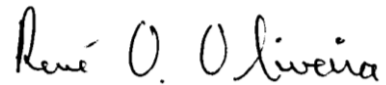
Rep. Jessica Farrar



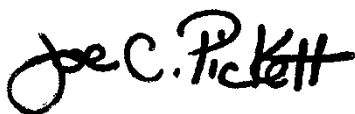
Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon



Rep. Marisa Marquez



Rep. Rene Oliveira



Rep. Joe Pickett



Rep. Ron Reynolds



Rep. Marc Veasey

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joaquin Castro". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Rep. Joaquin Castro

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliott Naishtat". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Rep. Elliott Naishtat