

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

October 18, 2007

The Honorable Lurita Doan  
Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
1800 F Street, NW, Room 6105  
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Doan:

We write to express our concern over the recent announcement by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) that, effective October 1, 2007, the Federal Government per diem rate for the New Orleans area was reduced by \$17 per day during peak season. In light of ongoing recovery efforts in the region, such a decrease in travel dollars will cause significant economic harm to the City of New Orleans and its surrounding parishes. Therefore, we respectfully request that GSA review this change and restore the per diem rate to the FY2007 level.

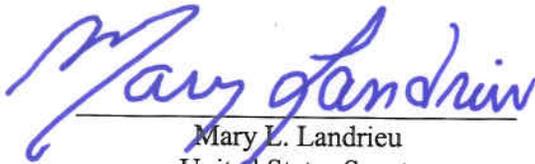
As you know, New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Because of the storm and subsequent levee breaks, the hotel and lodging industry suffered tremendous losses – losses which were immediately reflected in a decrease of \$13 in the New Orleans Federal per diem rate for FY 2005. Since that time, the industry has struggled to return to the economic condition it enjoyed immediately prior to these disasters, and the struggle continues to this day. Area hotels have seen a significant influx of Federal government travelers in post-Katrina New Orleans and anticipate the trend to continue through FY2008. For many local hotels, especially those close to Federal government offices or military installations, these government travelers have been a lifeline as the travel/tourism industry continues its recovery. The recently announced decrease would threaten the survival of these local businesses in the parishes of Orleans, St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines.

The GSA has reduced the per diem rate for the city from \$148 to \$131 per day during peak season, and from \$102 to \$99 per day during off-season for lodging expenses. The timing of this announcement comes as New Orleans hotels have seen many citywide conventions and groups confirm for the October 2007-May 2008 timeframe. This spike in business will make it harder for government travelers to find a room that falls within the new Federal per diem rate. Following other events of this magnitude, such as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in New York City, similar considerations were provided to the city and local industry. Therefore, we believe that ample precedent exists for the GSA to restore its previous rate.

The GSA reduction of the per diem rate to its lowest level since FY 2000, will harm recovery efforts in the region at a time when local communities and businesses need the most support. We therefore reiterate our request that GSA review the recent reduction and consider restoring the rate to the FY2007 levels. We urge your consideration, within all applicable guidelines, of this request.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu  
United States Senator



David Vitter  
United States Senator



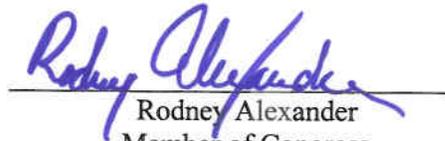
Richard Baker  
Member of Congress



Jim McCrery  
Member of Congress



William J. Jefferson  
Member of Congress



Rodney Alexander  
Member of Congress



Bobby Jindal  
Member of Congress



Charlie Melancon  
Member of Congress



Charles W. Boustany, Jr.  
Member of Congress