BUSH CALLS MEETING WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS

Devastation from Hurricane Andrew

President Bush met with several construction industry leaders on Monday, August 31, in the Roosevelt Room at The White House to solicit ideas and explore ways the administration could enhance the relief effort in Florida and Louisiana.

Those invited to the meeting were executive directors of the construction industry trade associations which included the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry, The National Home Builders Association, Associated General Contractors of America, American Institute of Architects and others.

President Bush described the devastation in the Florida area, stating that between 60,000 and 80,000 homes have been totally destroyed, leaving approximately 250,000 people homeless. The initial efforts conducted by 27 different federal agencies which are currently involved include: setting up “satellite” tent cities (in order to keep them to a manageable size), setting up a telecommunications network including “hot lines,” sending federal troops to lend assistance and to keep the peace, sending hygiene facilities, clearing of debris and trash, and setting up a humanitarian depot (to receive contributed goods) in Homestead.

Mr. Bush said that they are exploring the medium- and long-term needs of the hurricane aftermath. He said, “This has got be a long-term commitment, and it will take literally months to rebuild the communities.”

Mr. Bush made one special plea and appealed to all Americans to give generously to these volunteer organizations who serve so valiantly in south Florida and in Louisiana.

Discussions included talks pertaining to the complexities of the problems ahead, from building codes and check cashing to getting the kids back to school. Some concern was conveyed that contractors from outside the Florida area would not be able to operate because of the stringent licensing laws. Mr. Bush mentioned that he would look in to the possibility of relaxing some of these requirements. It was further discussed that this should be done with caution in order to keep the “fly by night” operations out.

Several in the group mentioned that their respective organizations had already set up their own contact points with members located in Florida for distribution of products and services. This was recognized by Bush and he said, “The cooperative spirit has been fantastic.” The President said his wishes and goals included, to a large degree, seeing the participation of neighbor helping neighbor and friend helping friend. He also mentioned that he would request a quicker settlement of claims from the insurance industry. He hoped this process would be speeded up, enabling the reconstruction process to move faster.

President Bush thanked everyone for attending the meeting and asked for their full support in this relief effort.