

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Petitioning Rally for Levee Board Consolidation Marks First Initiative of Newly-Formed Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

Members of the new grassroots organization will campaign for political unity and levee board reform with a day of massive petitioning.

WHAT: With the state House of Representative's failure to pass Senate Bill 95, which would have consolidated the Orleans, St. Tammany, St. Bernard and East Jefferson Parish levee boards into a regional authority, many New Orleans residents have taken matters into their own hands with the circulation of hundreds of petitions calling for levee board consolidation. The grassroots effort is the first major action of the newly-formed nonpartisan, nonsectarian group Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans.

"It's time we stand up, speak out, contact state and federal officials and let them know we want action and cannot tolerate any special interest deal-making," says Ruthie Frierson, founder and volunteer coordinator of the Citizens. "Gov. Blanco proposed the creation of an oversight authority over the existing levee boards, but that just compounds the problem. If we are going to show the federal government that we are serious about restoring levee safety, that we can put politics aside and speak with one voice, Gov. Blanco needs to insist on a single, regional levee board."

The initial meeting of the Citizens yielded over 150 interested participants who are now circulating the petitions and will continue to do so over the next few weeks. This Saturday will mark the organization's keystone petitioning day, as volunteers gather signatures in teams of three throughout New Orleans and as far as Edgar and LaPlace. Frierson predicts the petitions will receive tens of thousands of signatures. These petitions will be presented to Gov. Blanco and each state legislator who abstained or voted against SB 95 later in December.

WHEN: Saturday, December 3
10:30am-2:00-pm

WHERE: Crescent City Farmers Market
700 Magazine St.

WHY: The nascent and immediate creation of the Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans is a telltale sign of the city's passion for recovery and change, not just in words to the government or to neighbors, but in actions toward the government and with neighbors. Although the issue of levee board consolidation and reform is the organization's focus now, they hope to stay involved as a guiding force in the critical issues of rebuilding the region by mobilizing the thousands of citizens who want their city back and are willing to work for it.

"We've already received an overwhelming response from diverse groups in our community and around the state. We need the personal involvement of people from every neighborhood and every walk of life, every background," Frierson says. "You go through this mourning process, and then you get to a point of anger because you realize the urgency for action and change. You finally go to hope; you go to feeling it's going to be a total community effort to rebuild the city we love."

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Updates on additional locations throughout the city will follow later today.