



Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

Let your voice be heard in rebuilding the Greater New Orleans Area


[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Our Reform Initiatives](#)
[Resources & Collaborations](#)
[Archives](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Media

[Levee Home](#)
[Legislative Activity](#)
[Corps of Engineers Levee Tour Nov. 2010](#)
[Levee & Flood Protection Contacts](#)
[Archives](#)

Gambit Weekly

Enraged and Engaged

By Clancy DuBos

One of the bright spots to emerge from Hurricane Katrina is a re-awakening of civic responsibility on the part of ordinary citizens who were never before immersed in the process. The failure of our elected leaders to adequately recognize and address the scope of the disaster has people up in arms -- only this time they're doing more than just talking about it over coffee or cocktails.

Nowadays, people are enraged and engaged -- and the politicians had better watch out.

The best example I've seen lately is the coalition founded by New Orleans area women who are demanding that the region's levee boards be consolidated. A bill that would have done that was introduced in the recent special session by state Sen. Walter Boasso of Arabi. A slightly diluted version of Boasso's bill passed the Senate by a 37-0 vote, but inaction by Gov. Kathleen Blanco and stiff opposition from Boasso's St. Bernard counterparts in the House led to the bill's demise on a procedural vote. It didn't even get a committee hearing.

The bill enjoyed significant support. The New Orleans Business Council endorsed it while dissing Blanco's warm-and-fuzzy flood protection package as ineffectual. The business group said Blanco's measure would merely add another layer of bureaucracy to the already oppressive labyrinth of governmental flood-control wonks. That's part of what caused the Katrina flood to begin with: everyone was responsible ... and no one was responsible. On a state level, at least, Boasso's bill would have changed that.

When the House killed the measure, the reaction was intense among business leaders. Now, a group of women has taken up the gauntlet in support of the cause. Interestingly, the movement's founders are the sisters and wives of the Business Council types -- but their numbers have quickly grown to include women from all walks of life and all parts of town -- and a few men as well. They're organized, and they're taking aim.

"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 chair of the Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans. "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 Citizens started a petition drive that appears to be more popular than blue roofs. From its initial meeting in Frierson's home less than two weeks ago, the group has recruited hundreds of volunteers. At a meeting last Thursday in St. Charles Presbyterian Church, the group attracted more than 700 citizens -- and every one of them left with a petition. Frierson says the Citizens already have garnered at least 8,000 names, with thousands more every few days.

The group also has a Web site: <http://www.citizensfor1greaterneworleans.com/>. The site saw more than a thousand hits in its first two days.

The group went out with petitions again the past weekend, and this Tuesday (Dec. 13), the women will turn over the signatures to Business Council chairman Jay Lapeyre, who led the business group's assault in support of Boasso's bill. From there, the petitions will go to Blanco, who knows better than to snub the will of thousands of women.

"We are all volunteers," says Frierson. "We are non-partisan and grassroots. We accept no money. And we have one primary mission: levee board consolidation for citizen safety."

The group's mantra is "One Levee, One Board, One Voice."

Ironically, many of the women who organized Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans were the same folks to whom Blanco reached out in the closing days of her campaign for governor -- turning her bid into a women's crusade that ultimately put her in the governor's office.

Now, those same women want Blanco to do more than just watch from the sidelines. Given her low standings in the polls, Blanco had better recognize this as an opportunity to

9/5/2018

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans:

get out in front of the parade and pretend to lead. If not, the stampede will likely run right over her -- and the lawmakers who dare to resist this angry tide.

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans © 2005 - 2013