

June 19, 2008

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington DC 20536

Dear Secretary Chertoff:


In February we independently wrote to you regarding the EB-5 program and our support for a regional center that includes both Louisiana and Mississippi. Further, we expressed our support for Gulf Coast Funds Management Regional Center (GCFM), a specific applicant looking to serve both states. We have been informed that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) expressed concerns to GCFM about combining the entire states of Louisiana and Mississippi into one regional center. Further, we understand that currently, foreign investors in an EB-5 regional center can invest at the \$500,000 level only if the specific project is located in a targeted employment area (TEA). We support an EB-5 regional center that can serve the entirety of both Mississippi and Louisiana by investing across all areas of both states.

We understand the emphasis and the intent of the program to capture job creation that results from EB-5 investments, but we believe this can best be done if both states are combined in the regional center. The economies of the two states are similar and the industries where GCFM will invest are shared between both states, particularly from the perspective of job creation. When new jobs in these industries are created in Louisiana or Mississippi, indirect job creation is likely to occur across the two-state area.

Regarding the restriction on regional centers to only invest at the \$500,000 level in areas that are rural or meet the TEA definition of unemployment (150% times the national average), we believe that the situation in Mississippi and Louisiana is uniquely affected by the storms of 2005, and GCFM should be granted an exception to invest at the \$500,000 level in all areas of both states. The New Orleans metropolitan statistical area lost about 22 percent of its permanent jobs (over 120,000 jobs) as a result of Hurricane Katrina, and the hurricane had a similar impact on the Gulfport-Biloxi and Pascagoula metropolitan statistical areas. These areas are "targeted employment areas" because only capital investment that creates new jobs can bring full recovery and allow all of our people to come home.

Given these issues, we request your support for the approval of the GCFM regional center in a manner that allows it to fulfill the objectives of the EB-5 program and put funds to work to create needed jobs in Louisiana and Mississippi. We hope this approval can be granted quickly, within the next 30 days, and will allow Gulf Coast Funds Management to invest, at the individual \$500,000 level, in all areas across Louisiana and Mississippi. We believe the unique circumstances of ongoing recovery from the storms of 2005 and the partnership shared by Louisiana and Mississippi across key industries create a clear cause to proceed in this manner with the GCFM application.

Sincerely,


Bobby Jindal
Governor of Louisiana


Haley Barbour
Governor of Mississippi

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