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NEWS RELEASE

FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE ENDS THIS MONTH FOR MOST HURRICANE KATRINA AND RITA VICTIMS

*Judge Emmett Asks County Housing Authority To Turn Focus
To Victims of Hurricanes Ike and Gustav*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced this week that final rent payments for many families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will end with this month's payment. As a result, the Harris County Housing Authority - which has been overseeing much of the program for HUD – can now better focus its efforts on assisting victims of Hurricane Ike.

"When thousands of victims of Hurricane Katrina first fled to Harris County in 2005, we called them 'evacuees'," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "Now, three and a half years later, most have gone home. But those who have chosen to stay, we now call neighbors, and it's time that they be fully integrated as neighbors and not as victims any longer. I congratulate the Harris County Housing Authority for the efficiency with which they administered much of the federal assistance Katrina victims received. I now call on our housing officials to concentrate their considerable skills on assisting our other neighbors, whose homes and lives were damaged last year by Hurricane Ike."

Emmett pointed out that federal housing assistance will continue for families displaced by Hurricane Ike until at least March 2010.

"We showed the world how quickly and efficiently we on the Texas Gulf Coast could recover from a major hurricane, but there are still thousands of us that need assistance with that recovery," Emmett said.

Guy Rankin, the executive director of the Harris County Housing Authority, said this week that his department and social-service agencies had helped nearly 8,000 families become self-sufficient since Hurricane Katrina struck the Louisiana coast in 2005. Rankin and HUD officials stressed that, although housing assistance to most Katrina victims will expire at the end of the month, some elderly and disabled victims will still be eligible for aid.

The *Disaster Housing Assistance Program* is a temporary rental assistance program created in September 2007 by HUD and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who had not received previous HUD assistance.