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18TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0518

August 24, 2009

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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to request that you visit my congressional district and declare it an economic disaster area. This economic downturn has disproportionately affected some areas of the country including California's Central Valley. I believe that seeing the devastation firsthand is the only way you can fully appreciate the extent of the economic destruction plaguing my constituents. Pursuing farther-reaching solutions to the recession is the only way my suffering communities will obtain the federal resources and assistance they need to keep from falling off the map.

In previous letters to you, I informed you that I would be drafting legislation to establish an economic disaster designation. I have indeed made progress in drafting this legislation and obtaining support from my colleagues in the House; as you know, the legislative process is slow and cumbersome. Unfortunately, my constituents cannot wait any longer for economic relief. That is why I am asking you to use your executive authority to make the declaration and quickly direct federal funds to those areas to help them regain and retain jobs and survive the economic crisis.

The stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, while appreciated, are not nearly sufficient to help the Central Valley or the state of California avoid a full-blown economic depression. We are witnessing the systematic dismantling of our state and local governments. Absent a bolder federal response, this downturn threatens to subject my constituents and all Californians to permanent economic underdevelopment. Mr. President, it is time to apply a tourniquet.

California's unemployment rate is 11.6%, far above the national average of 9.4%. In my congressional district, unemployment is 17.6% in Merced, 16.6% in Modesto, and 15.5% in Stockton. In Merced, unemployment has been above 10% since November of 2007, and since January 2008 in Modesto. Job loss continues to grow, not improve. These sustained and exorbitant unemployment rates will permanently undermine the economy in the Central Valley if we do not act with urgency. Cash-strapped state and local governments are unable to address a crisis of this magnitude. Only your Administration can orchestrate a response effective enough to rescue California and the Central Valley from perpetually high unemployment and a persistent economic depression.

In addition to requesting an economic disaster area designation for the Central Valley, I am asking that you pursue the following three solutions to help California's economy recover. First, I request that after making the economic disaster area designation, the Administration distribute additional federal funding to these designated areas to fund public works projects that will create jobs and stimulate the economy. Second, I request that you prioritize and support a robust reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration. Economic adjustment grants are critical for job retention and creation and will be imperative for areas such as the Central Valley to rebuild their economies. Finally, I request that you allocate returned TARP funds to help to keep struggling homeowners in their homes. Whether by providing temporary loans to help unemployed borrowers make mortgage payments or bolstering the Making Home Affordable program, a more effective approach to foreclosure prevention is imperative for economic recovery.

While I know there are numerous pressing issues facing our nation, you are the only person capable of marshalling the resources expeditiously to effectuate change before the crisis worsens. By the end of September, three cabinet secretaries will have traveled to the Central Valley to witness the destruction wrought by this economic downturn. While I greatly appreciate their time and attention, we must now provide direct relief that will truly address the problem. Again, I respectfully request that you travel to this region of the country so you can see firsthand why the solutions above are necessary to help those in my district who are suffering, and why we need a more aggressive federal response to the economic downturn.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis Cardoza", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress