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## LEVEE REIMBURSEMENT LANGUAGE TO BE FILED TODAY

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) and U.S. Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (D-Mercedes) intend to file legislation today that would allow Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 to be reimbursed for monies spent on federal levee projects. Similar legislation was filed in 2008; however, it did not move past committee.

Hidalgo County Judge J.D. Salinas III has been in Washington D.C. this week for inaugural events and meetings with agency leaders, where he learned of the intent to file this language. He has issued the following statement:

“Speaking for the entire Hidalgo County Commissioners Court, we are encouraged today that Sen. John Cornyn and Congressman Ruben Hinojosa have so quickly filed levee reimbursement language that will help Hidalgo County recover local funds spent on federal projects. We are hopeful that this time around, the levee reimbursement language will gain traction in Congress. Our levee system is more than shovel-ready. This is a huge project where roughly 40 miles of levee are very close to having *already been completed*. Yet, the Hidalgo County taxpayers have been paying for it despite the fact that rehabilitating the river levees, which are owned by the IBWC, is a federal responsibility.

We have already spent about \$48.5 million on the joint levee barrier project with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and \$18.7 million to enforce three sections of levee in western Hidalgo County. When our taxpayers passed the \$100 million bond in November 2006, which is the pot of money paying for these two mentioned projects, they envisioned it going toward local projects. In fact, we have more than \$415 million in local drainage projects awaiting funding, and time is of the essence. Next hurricane season cannot come and go without action. We cannot continue to sink local funds into a federal project with no hope of ever getting it back.

We are certainly pleased with the proposed funding level of the IBWC including in the House’s proposed economic stimulus package. At no point in history, has this agency been funded at

\$224 million. We hope to access at least \$49 million of that money for additional levee rehabilitation projects that are ready to go. Yet, we must also be reimbursed for the monies already spent by Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 on federal projects. It is a matter of economic vitality and ensuring future growth for this region.

We are very pleased today that Congressman Hinojosa and Sen. Cornyn have filed levee reimbursement language in their respective chambers. We will continue to urge other members of the House and Senate to get behind this legislation.”

For more information, visit [www.co.hidalgo.tx.us](http://www.co.hidalgo.tx.us)