



JUDGE SALINAS ASKS FOR LEVEE FUNDING TO BE INCLUDED IN ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

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Hidalgo County Judge J.D. Salinas III has asked President Bush, U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, Congressmen Rubén Hinojosa and Henry Cuellar and Texas Governor Rick Perry to support including \$100 million in levee funding in the federal economic stimulus package that the U.S. Senate is expected to pass this week.

“We feel the biggest economic stimulus to South Texas would be to fund the levee project. We shouldn’t be asking how much fixing the levees will cost, but how much not fixing the levees will cost.”

According to preliminary estimates from a study commissioned by Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1, the impact of a levee collapse due to a 100-year flood in the river would be more than \$1.7 billion to Hidalgo County.

“It’s not only the hurricane we worry about either,” Judge Salinas said. “What about the economic hurricane that could disrupt the growth we’ve enjoyed if FEMA releases its new map. Yearly premiums in excess of \$150 million per year would stall investment and hurt hardworking families with mortgages.”

Hidalgo County has dedicated \$40 million to fix the most critical 18 miles of river levee, but the entire levee system would cost at least \$125 million.

“We are serious about finding a solution. But we must remember that this levee is a federal responsibility,” Judge Salinas said.

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