Two Year Katrina Anniversary
Tough Questions – Talking Points

Business
1. Is the New Orleans region still a viable option to do business?
   - **YES!! The New Orleans region is still viable!**
   - The hurricane did not alter our primary assets.
   - Our strategic location advantage remains, with one of the largest port complexes in the nation, six Class A railroads, and an international airport.
   - The energy sector, accounting for 30% of the nation’s oil and gas production, was quick to rebound after the storm, surpassing its pre-storm employment level.
   - The petrochemical corridor west of the city, with more than $50 billion in production before the hurricane, is undergoing extensive expansion.
   - Coupled with other core industries – shipbuilding and aerospace equipment manufacturing, food processing, higher education, and tourism - our economy remains strong. And throughout all our difficulties, we have retained the culture and spirit which defines our region.
   - Jobs in the metropolitan area have rebounded to 83% of pre-storm levels. Unemployment is below the national average. Rebuilding, repair, and replacement of personal items have brought a tremendous infusion of capital into the economy, with more to come.
   - A younger generation is moving into the city, Latter and Blum President Arthur Sterbcow cited for every 1 person leaving, there are 2 younger (25-42) moving in.
   - The region is a land of opportunity, attracting investors, entrepreneurs and young professionals.
   - GNO, Inc. has been involved with 140 projects in 2007 and has seen almost $8.5 billion in new investment in the region in energy, manufacturing, multi-family housing and tourism projects.

2. How is the business community in the region stepping up to ensure the region’s images and perceptions are transformed post-Katrina?
   - The Greater New Orleans region is currently under a period of unprecedented transformation.
   - The civil and business leaders are no longer accepting the status quo.
   - Leaders have demanded the rooting out of corruption through consolidation of duplicative political structures and a wholesale redesign of the ailing public school and criminal justice system.
   - The storm prompted an outcry from citizens, which is leading to a business environment that promotes talent development, transparency of government, safety and security of the community and financial opportunities.
Crime

1. Are the City of New Orleans and the region safe for locals and tourists?
   - The ratio of police to citizens is actually higher than pre-Katrina.
   - The crimes that are reported in the media are drug related or criminal on criminal and **ARE NOT RANDOM ACTS of VIOLENCE**.
   - The city and region continue to host millions of tourists a year and have provided a safe environment for tourists and their families to enjoy the sites and sounds of the many attractions and festivities.

2. What are the city and the police department doing to protect the citizens and visitors from crime?
   - The New Orleans Police Department and the Quality of Life Officers have increased patrols.
   - The National Guard is patrolling areas undergoing rebuilding efforts. Their efforts have allowed the NOPD to increase the number of officers in the highly populated areas and tourist spots around the city.
   - An infusion of experienced talent into the District Attorney’s office handling violent criminal cases:
     - The Violent Crimes Unit, which handles homicides and violent crimes, hired eight experienced lawyers with a significant increase in starting salaries. Those low salaries resulted in attorneys with 2 years or less of experience and with little criminal prosecution cases going up against well-seasoned, 15-year-or-more veteran defense attorneys.
     - The starting salary for all attorneys in the DA’s office has been raised 66% in order to attract more experienced prosecutors. (The former $30,000 starting salary was equal to the starting salary of a police officer recruit with a GED.)
     - A new study performed by Lee Brown, a former Houston mayor and police chief of Houston, Atlanta and New York, has created increased focus on community policing. Brown’s study is a comprehensive analysis of the New Orleans Police Department. The report focuses on the need for greater links between the police department and the citizenry. It also stresses the role citizens can play in helping police.
     - New 25% higher starting salaries and higher police pay raises have been implemented to increase talent and make the department more competitive.
     - A new interactive neighborhood crimes web site has been re-instituted by the New Orleans Police Department. The new site aims to help citizens be aware of the crimes happening in their neighborhood – part of the publicly-demanded government transparency.
• Court Watch NOLA is bringing awareness of how the criminal and judiciary systems operate by empowering citizen to be court observers. This organization, run by a former prosecutor, has citizens observing how the system is working. It trains and puts citizens as watchers in the courtrooms to track cases. [http://www.courtwatchnola.org/](http://www.courtwatchnola.org/).

• A new Crime Lab is being brought on line.
  
  o The City of New Orleans has entered into a contract with the University of New Orleans for space for a new crime lab. After the storm, the city was without a crime lab and police had to send forensics on cases to nearby parishes. The new lab is about 50% -60% operational. The new crime lab will help speed people through the court system by increasing turn around time for evidence. That allows trials to be set earlier and convictions to be returned more quickly. [http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-21/118076888122650.xml&coll=1](http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-21/118076888122650.xml&coll=1)

• The District Attorney and the Chief of Police are keeping policy makers more up-to-date with regular appearances before the City Council.

• The Metropolitan Crime Commission, which investigates public corruption and wrongdoing, has a new quarterly report to keep policy makers up-to-date on issues involving public safety. The executive director, Rafael C. Goyeneche III, says the report will bring the accountability and transparency that citizens are demanding. [http://www.metropolitancrimecommission.org/](http://www.metropolitancrimecommission.org/)

**Levees and Storm Protection**

1. What has been done since Katrina to repair the levees and has the Corp made them stronger?
   - Congress appropriated $6.2 billion for improved storm protection.
   - All damages have been repaired.
   - Deficiencies have been corrected, floodwalls are armored, transitions are strengthened.
   - Grass growing to prevent erosion of repaired sections.
   - Repairs are ongoing for non-federal pump stations.
   - New Orleans District prepared to respond: people, stations, communications and rehearsals.
   - Long term coastal restoration to be funded by offshore royalty revenues.

**Housing**

1. Are there enough rental properties available for current and potential residents?
   - As the rebuilding continues, the area is seeing an increase in rental units being rebuilt, renovated and constructed for more affordable options.
   - The Louisiana Enterprise Zone program provides a sales tax rebate for rental units built in South Louisiana.
   - We are seeing the costs of rentals stabilize and the number available increase.
   - The Road Home program provides incentives to rental property owners to rebuild their units and provide affordable rents to the area.
2. Are devastated neighborhoods being rebuilt?
   - Yes, we are seeing neighborhoods coming back. The people of these neighborhoods have spent countless hours and dedication to rebuild and be proactive to reinvest into their neighborhoods.
   - We anticipate acceleration in residents returning and rebuilding in the region as we see the Road Home money being distributed. (73% of people who applied indicated a preference to rebuild)
   - This area is also proud of the generosity and commitment of philanthropic people and organizations from around the world that have donated dollars, materials and time to those in need to rebuild their homes.

Education
1. What is being done to rebuild the schools in the region, what steps are being taken to ensure that the system is better than pre-Katrina?
   - Post-Katrina a new “system of schools” has emerged.
   - There are 58 schools open in the Louisiana Recovery Schools District serving over 26,000 students.
   - The Greater New Orleans area has approximately 200 parochial schools, including Catholic and private schools (pre-K through 12th grade).
   - The system pre-Katrina was broken, on the verge of bankruptcy and the physical conditions of the school buildings were poor and in need of serious repair. Since Katrina, the citizens and educators are taking a proactive approach and a new model of public education is transforming.
   - The citizens are invested in the new system’s success. There are smaller class sizes, more money to the classrooms.
   - The new model has attracted new, talented teachers from across the US.
   - In the next five years, the New Orleans model will be a national model for urban education.
2. Are the colleges and universities back?
   - Yes! And gaining momentum.
   - Greater New Orleans has an incredible network of public and private higher education institutes open in the area: Tulane University, Loyola University, the University of New Orleans, Our Lady of Holy Cross College, Xavier University, Dillard University, Southern University of New Orleans, Southeastern University, Delgado Community College, Nunez Community College and Louisiana Technical College.
   - College enrollments for 2007-2008 increased between 30 to 50 percent over last year for some universities; Tulane Medical School accepted its largest class in the history of the university

Political Corruption
1. Since the storm, there have been a lot of political scandals, is it politics as usual?
   - No, a number of reforms have been enacted through grassroots advocacy efforts by citizens since the storm.
2. Is any reform taking place?
   - Yes, the area went from seven to one assessor, from several levee districts to two. A new inspector general for the City of New Orleans has been hired and the state legislature passed three ethics reform bills in the 2007 session.
• It is not politics as usual. Since the storm the demand for transparency has led citizenry and leaders to root out corruption, leading in some cases to public trials and media coverage. This is a sign that Louisiana is very serious about its reforms and its future
• On a local level, New Orleans established a public integrity officer.

Insurance
1. Are businesses and homeowners able to assess and find affordable policies to remain in the region?
   • The region and the State have seen the cost of insurance increase and insurers stop writing new policies and some have left the market.
   • The business community and GNO, Inc. banded together to create an Insurance Task Force to create solutions to the crisis and work with the legislature to come up with ways to ease the burden on businesses and homeowners.
   • One solution recently adopted is the creation of a new state $100 million incentive program to attract regional insurance companies to the market.
   • Nine new insurance companies have located in Louisiana since the storm

Healthcare
1. Are the hospitals back?
   Yes. The regions hospitals are open and providing quality care to its patients. The following hospitals are open in the region: Children's Hospital, East Jefferson General Hospital, Kindred New Orleans, Lakeview Regional Medical Center, Medical Center of Louisiana, Northshore Regional Medical Center, Ochsner Baptist Memorial Medical Center, Ochsner Medical Center-Kenner, Ochsner Medical Center – Westbank, Ochsner Health Systems, Slidell Memorial Hospital, St. Tammany Parish Hospital, Touro Infirmary, Tulane University Hospital and West Jefferson Medical Center.
2. Is there a healthcare system in place for the indigent population and if not who is caring for the poor?
   • University Hospital, which is part of the Charity system, has reopened and is providing limited services.
   • University Hospital has a trauma center open operated by LSU with 26 surgery beds and 10 intensive care beds.
   • Charity Hospital was damaged in the hurricane and the state is in negotiations with the VA hospital to build a state of the art facility to care for the indigent population. Regardless of whether the VA hospital co-exists with the university system, LSU plans to build a new charity hospital in the next five years.
   • Currently, the private hospitals are caring for the poor in the absence of a fully restored charity hospital.

Tourism
1. Are the hotels back?
   • Overall 208 metropolitan area accommodations are open with 31,000 of 38,000 hotel rooms open.
   • The area has seen new hotels like Harrah’s Hotel open since the storm and many undergo renovations such as the Ritz-Carlton and the Chateau Sonesta for a total investment of over $500 million in hotel refurbishment projects.
2. Are the restaurants back?
   • There are more than 1500 restaurants in the New Orleans region open for business since the storms. New award winning restaurants have also opened in the past two years.
   • The unique cuisine that can only be found in this part of the world is better than ever.

3. Are the main tourist attractions such as the French Quarter, zoo, the aquarium and the museums back?
   • Yes, most of the sights that tourists love about the New Orleans region are open and fully operational. The zoo, aquarium, museums and other main attractions are up and running.