

Louisiana attacks Katrina shortfall

by UPI

BATON ROUGE, La. -- Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco has proposed \$715 million in state money to direct toward the state's "Road Home" program for Hurricane Katrina recovery.

Blanco's budget officer briefed legislators Sunday on the governor's initial plan to help close a \$2.9 billion to \$5 billion shortfall in the Road Home budget, the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported Monday.

"We've committed \$4.6 billion of our own revenues to this recovery," budget official Jerry Luke LeBlanc said Sunday. "It's a fallacy (to say) that the state has not put up its own resources. Maybe they don't care about that in Washington but that's what we've done."

The executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, Andy Kopplin, maintained Sunday that the shortfall was caused by bad damage estimates from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Times Picayune reported. The White House says the state inappropriately included wind damage, something typically covered by insurance, in the program.

Blanco's latest funding proposals would include spending \$300 million that was set aside for a steel mill that now isn't being built to Louisiana, \$67 million that had been set aside to help former residents who left after Katrina return to Louisiana and \$267 million in federal block grant building repair money, the newspaper said.

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