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BAR ASSOCIATION**

LEADING THE LEGAL COMMUNITY SINCE 1924

August 30, 2007

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**The Honorable C. Ray Nagin**  
**Mayor**  
**City of New Orleans**  
1300 Perdido Street, Suite 2E04  
New Orleans, LA 70112

**Dr. Edward J. Blakely**  
**Executive Director, Recovery Management**  
**City of New Orleans**  
1300 Perdido Street, Suite 8W03  
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear Mayor Nagin and Dr. Blakely:

I write in my capacity as President of the New Orleans Bar Association. The New Orleans Bar Association recently learned that the Orleans Parish Civil District Court and First City Court may be relocated from downtown New Orleans to the Tulane & Broad Recovery Zone. Because of concerns we have of the proposed relocation's impact on the legal community and downtown New Orleans, we respectfully request that a final decision on the proposed relocation not be made until our members have an opportunity to provide input on this important issue.

We are most concerned about the devastating impact the proposed relocation would have on the legal community. As you know, over 3,200 lawyers conduct business from their offices in the Central Business District. This area is considered the home of the New Orleans legal community, housing more than 70% of the lawyers in Orleans Parish, together with approximately 3,550 paralegals, secretaries, bookkeepers and other legal support staff. The legal community represents a major economic force contributing to the vitality of downtown New Orleans. This viable cluster of the legal community industry exists downtown because of the availability of high-end office space; the proximity to federal and state civil courts, including the Civil District Court, the First City Court, the United States District Court, the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Louisiana Supreme Court, the Louisiana Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal, and other administrative "courts" such as workers compensation "court"; immediate access to large banks, financial services, high quality restaurants, hotels, the French Quarter; and the nearby availability of a large number of ancillary businesses that provide services to lawyers such as court reporters, litigation support companies, copy services, courier services, and various bar organizations.<sup>1</sup> Having such a large number of lawyers in close proximity to these courts not only facilitates court appearances but also allows the lawyers and judges to collaborate on community, educational and bar projects.

<sup>1</sup> Most New Orleans lawyers have primarily a civil practice, as opposed to the very small number of criminal defense lawyers whose offices are centered around Tulane & Broad.

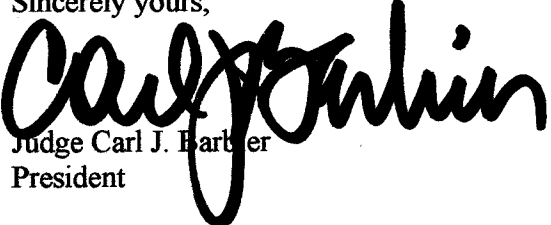
The proposed relocation would hurt this economic cluster and diminish the viability of downtown New Orleans. Dispersal of the lawyers, their staffs and support businesses detract from the positive cluster experience. Moreover, the loss of the high paying jobs of lawyers and their support staff from downtown likely will result in substantial vacancies in office buildings. Indeed, a leading Metairie firm that recently purchased a building downtown announced it may not move if the civil courts are relocated. In addition, a move of lawyers and their support staff likely will cause a substantial loss of business for downtown restaurants, hotels and other retail businesses. Lawyers regularly patronize the area's world-class restaurants, shops and related personal services and are a major source of business. I dare say that the legal community and these associated businesses practically kept the downtown area viable post Katrina, as 99% of the large law firms returned to downtown and began operating within weeks of the storm.

While the proposed relocation surely will harm downtown New Orleans, there is little likelihood it will jump-start the Tulane and Broad Street Recovery Area, as intended. Most lawyers and the related ancillary business would not relocate to that Recovery Area, which lacks access to support services, other courts, quality hotels and restaurants; is aesthetically unappealing; is less accessible for locals and out of town attorneys and litigants, who would have to drive rather than walk to court; has no potential for foot traffic; and unfortunately has a reputation of having a higher crime rate.

Rather than jump start the development of this area, the proposed relocation more likely will motivate lawyers to relocate to Jefferson Parish or other suburbs, particularly given that many of the law firms' employees presently reside in Jefferson or other parishes. We believe this move is akin to robbing Peter to pay Paul and would cause a net economic loss for Orleans Parish and substantially undermine the viability of downtown.

We would like to schedule a meeting to discuss these issues at your earliest opportunity, before any final decision is made. My office will call in a few days to talk about setting up a meeting.

Sincerely yours,



Judge Carl J. Barber  
President