

State should make up for mistakes

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Re: "Road Home initiatives announced; Homeowners could get more help," Page A9, May 5.

Louisiana should use some of its remaining Road Home money to help repair the damage caused by the negligence and ineptitude of its contractors who failed in their responsibility to assist all of the victims of Katrina.

We were among the first to respond to Gov. Blanco's initial call to register for disaster relief after we lost our Lakeview home to the flood that followed in the aftermath of Katrina. However, through the negligence of the state's contractor, ICF International, we were never contacted. By the time we realized that we were entitled to relief for our uncompensated losses, we were shut out of the program because of a deadline that was missed.

The Office of Community Development ignored the request that Sen. Landrieu made on our behalf that we be furnished an "exception form" to qualify past the deadline. At the time, Sen. Landrieu chaired the Senate Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery.

The courts never questioned the merits of the case and simply dismissed it on the basis of qualified immunity after attorneys for the contractors pleaded that their clients were not obligated to make an exception, even in the case of contractor error, and that as agents of the state, they were immune from liability.

Instead of hiding behind the shield of immunity, Louisiana can use the present opportunity to help change the public's perception of our state, which is considered a disgrace in the eyes of the nation.

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