

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor  
Office of the Majority Leader  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor:

We write to urge you to bring the Senate's recently passed disaster assistance package to the House floor for a vote immediately.

As you know, the Senate passed legislation to provide \$6.9 billion in needed funds for ongoing disaster relief efforts across the country. This plan, passed with bipartisan support, takes a more comprehensive approach and will make significantly more emergency aid available to Americans in need than the current House proposal, which does not provide sufficient resources needed to respond to Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee, and the wildfires in Texas, let alone other disasters that may occur in the next two months.

The perilously low level of funding available in FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund has been widely reported. The Fund had \$377 million remaining as of Wednesday, September 15, and will run out before the end of the month. It is imperative that Congress responds immediately. FEMA is currently only funding immediate needs, focusing on damage from recent disasters. Assistance has been postponed to communities that have suffered from past disasters and FEMA cannot begin full recovery efforts in areas recently devastated because of the lack of adequate resources. Recovery takes long enough without these unnecessary delays. Uncertainty regarding emergency aid certainly does not help our constituents and communities rebuild.

In addition to replenishing FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, the Senate bill also includes necessary funding for a number of other equally critical recovery programs under the jurisdiction of USDA, HUD and the Department of Commerce. These programs, which were not addressed in the House proposal, operate alongside FEMA to help farmers who lost harvests and livestock, families who lost homes, and communities that lost jobs and small businesses.

While final funding decisions are yet to be made for Fiscal Year 2012, additional agriculture disaster assistance is required now in order to clear out backlogs in USDA's disaster programs and ensure funding reaches areas affected by Irene and Lee in a timely manner. As of September 15, 2011, the USDA estimated \$77 million in outstanding Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) requests, \$73 million in Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) needs this fiscal year and a wait-list of \$187.5 million for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP).

Many farms in affected regions do not have crop insurance, making these some of the only programs they can access after such disasters.

The families that remain without homes in shelters are not interested in seeing more gridlock in Washington. The farmers who lost their crops and livestock do not care about debates over deficits and offsets. The entrepreneurs who lost their small businesses cannot afford to see us play politics. Whenever a natural disaster has occurred in the past, this government has come to the aid and assistance of those affected. Under the Bush Administration, this Congress was asked for and supplied supplemental disaster relief funding eight times and often passed these bills with overwhelming bipartisan support. This time should be no different.

We have an obligation to fulfill to our fellow citizens. FEMA and other federal agencies need the entirety of the Senate's bill to help suffering Americans today. Please prevent disaster aid from getting caught up in budget brinksmanship by bringing the bill passed by the Senate up for a vote.

Sincerely,

Maria Mendez  
Bill

Joseph Crowley  
Charles Schumer

Bill Higin  
Bonnie Thompson  
Rita M. Long

Paul D. Tonko

Bob Finer

Tim Holden

John B. Dingell

Steve Israel

Louise M. Slaughter  
Charles B. Shuler

Jane Hahn

Yvette J. Clocker

Paul Rentsch

Steve Cohe

Allyson J. Schwartz

Harold Johnson

Raul M. Gujardo

Michael Mustardo

Steve Carver

Jim McDevitt

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Paul M. Clark

John W. Oliver

Paul Smith

Rush Holt

James Lee

James P. Smith

Tim Ryan

Dave Lombardi

Kathleen C. Hochel

Tom J. Walsh

Bob A. Brady

Jim H. ...

Bob C. Peter

Alce L. Hastings

Anna Liss

Joseph M. Molyneux

Steven K. Notlman

Jose E. Serrano

Lynn Woolsey

Heidi Johnson Lee

Dary L. Ackerman

John Long Jr.

Rosa DeLauro

Edward J. Markey

Howard Dossert

Corine Brown

Jessold Madler

Guillermo B.

Brezon Meach

Jim Moran

Danny K. Davis

Eliot L. Engel

Glean Holmes Vot

Carolyn McCauley

Barbara Lee

Robert E. Andrews

W. Belknap

Pete Stark

Mike Dwyer

Severid E Connolly

John M Hunter

Tim J

Jim M. Brown

San Bartolotta

Deming Mearns

Sam Lane

Peter Welch

Lili Li

Bill Pascelly

George Miller

Maje K. Hiron