

## EMBARGOED UNTIL NOVEMBER 18, 2024 @ 5:00 AM ET

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Director Shalanda Young, Office of Management and Budget

**Date:** November 18, 2024

**Re:** Congress Must Move Swiftly to Pass Critical Disaster Relief

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The last time Congress passed a comprehensive disaster package was in December 2022 as part of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023*. Since then, numerous deadly storms and disasters have struck communities across the country and Americans are still picking up the pieces. This includes, of course, Hurricanes Helene and Milton, but also severe storms in [Alaska](#), [Connecticut](#), [Louisiana](#), [New Mexico](#), [Virginia](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Illinois](#) – and that is only a few of the many major disasters that have occurred over the past few months. The Biden-Harris Administration has been on the ground, standing with impacted families and working with local and state officials, first responders, and business owners to assess the damage from the storms, re-open roads and restore critical services, and help communities heal. The short-term Federal response has been funded through FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, which supports Stafford Act authorities like Public Assistance, Debris Removal, and Individual Assistance, and is in need of additional funding. What the Stafford Act does not account for is long-term recovery, including housing, agriculture losses, and certain transportation infrastructure. To ensure these communities get comprehensive recovery assistance, our Administration has made [multiple requests](#) to Congress outlining the need for emergency funding to address these disasters, and detailing the consequences of failing to deliver this aid. To date, Congress has yet to act.

**Over the past several weeks, Federal agencies have written to Congressional leaders underscoring the need to replenish key disaster response programs and fund long term recovery for communities suffering since 2022:**

- [The Department of Homeland Security](#) called out the needs for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund:
  - *"Communities across the nation, especially those affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, need FEMA's continued and uninterrupted support during their recovery. In recent weeks, FEMA has led strong and coordinated federal assistance for ongoing response and recovery efforts in partnership with impacted states and tribes. Congress must provide additional funding for the DRF so FEMA may provide financial assistance to repair housing; rebuild public infrastructure like schools, utilities, and roads; and for mitigation projects that will reduce the likelihood of damage from future disaster events."*
- [The Small Business Administration](#) warned of the impending exhaustion of funding for its disaster loan program:
  - *"SBA is managing 36 disasters across 24 states, and is now experiencing a surge in disaster lending as a result of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton that is quickly exhausting our remaining disaster lending balances...At a time when many disaster survivors are looking for help and support, a lack of SBA disaster loans will impact recovery across the nation."*
- [The Department of Agriculture](#) highlighted assistance for farmers and rural communities:
  - *"Due to the level of devastation resulting from Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the Department will likely need additional tools to comprehensively address the challenges producers and rural communities are facing. For instance, without additional funding for Emergency Watershed Protection, assistance to local communities to clear debris and*

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*restore culverts bridges and other infrastructure will be delayed. In recent disasters, Congress provided additional funding to support farmers and ranchers with crop losses; without this funding, uninsured producers will not get any assistance.”*

- **[The Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)** called for resources for its Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program:
  - *“As Congress considers the next supplemental funding package, it is critical that Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle stand with millions of Americans who deserve Federal support. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, which provides communities the funding they need to rebuild, must be included in a comprehensive disaster relief funding package upon Congress’s return in November.”*
- **[The Department of Transportation](#)** called for support in rebuilding damaged roads and bridges:
  - *“The funding that the Biden-Harris administration delivered to multiple states in recent weeks has been critical to reopening roads and clearing debris in the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, but without Congressional action, the federal government cannot continue to offer states emergency resources when they need it most. The failure to provide additional funds has already set back the long-term recovery efforts of states around the country that have been diligently rebuilding from previous disasters.”*
- **[The Environmental Protection Agency](#)** underscored needs to protect access to safe drinking water:
  - *“Damages are still being tabulated, but government and private experts estimate the storms caused tens of billions of dollars of damage, which is in line with Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey, and Superstorm Sandy.”*

Congress and Administrations in both parties have a long history of providing for communities on a bipartisan basis in the wake of natural disasters—including over \$90 billion in aid after Hurricane Katrina in 2005; over \$50 billion following Hurricane Sandy in 2013; and over \$120 billion following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017. The Biden-Harris Administration stands ready to work with lawmakers to deliver the vital resources our communities need with strong bipartisan and bicameral support – just as Speaker Mike Johnson [has promised](#).

In the coming days, the Biden-Harris Administration will send to Congress a comprehensive disaster package. We look forward to working with Congress to quickly pass emergency funding so the Federal Government can meet its obligations to the American people.