

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2017

Honorable Elaine C. Duke
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Honorable William B. "Brock" Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Acting Secretary Duke and Administrator Long:

As Members of the Florida Congressional Delegation, we are writing to inquire as to FEMA's role in helping Florida recover from the disastrous effects of Hurricane Irma. While the delegation truly appreciates the critical work being done by FEMA employees in the region, numerous mayors and city managers from our state have approached us with very real concerns that have not yet been adequately addressed in the aftermath of the hurricane.

First among these issues is the distinct lack of contractors and subcontractors available to fulfill debris removal contracts. As you know, a number of cities and counties entered into pre-hurricane contracts, as recommended by FEMA, for the removal of debris at set rates. However, since that time, some contractors and subcontractors have refused to honor these pre-existing contracts, choosing instead to pursue more lucrative contracts in other Florida counties that chose not to pre-negotiate debris removal contracts before Hurricane Irma made landfall.

As a result, some communities are in a difficult situation; either they attempt to enforce the contracts they originally entered into, even though many subcontractors are now unavailable due to their acceptance of other contracts, or they bid new contracts on the competitive market without any assurance that they will be reimbursed by FEMA for any costs of debris removal in excess of the rates they originally negotiated. We as a delegation understand that FEMA is unable to implement a state-wide market rate for debris removal, but would request that FEMA make senior officials available to Florida cities and counties to help guide them through the reimbursement and procurement process.

Florida communities are also concerned with the lack of specificity when it comes to debris removal on private roads. While we certainly recognize that FEMA guidelines generally prohibit reimbursement for the removal of debris on private roads, we have asked FEMA multiple times to provide guidance on the specific process for FEMA reimbursement preapproval, as well as the expected timeline for cities or counties that apply to FEMA for such reimbursement.

Thus far, this information has not been forthcoming. Municipalities have received varying and mixed messages on FEMA's process necessary to ensure reimbursement for any debris removal on private roads. Although FEMA representatives have said that they will expeditiously process any such preapproval requests from cities or counties, it remains unclear and uncertain.

While we certainly recognize the enormous demands with which your agencies are dealing, Hurricane Irma has resulted in widespread storm-generated debris that poses a public health and safety problem unless it is quickly and safely removed. Barring any further action from FEMA, this debris will continue to sit in Florida, attracting rats and mosquitos that can potentially carry the Zika virus and pose other avoidable public health risks. We ask for your assistance in remedying these issues swiftly and effectively.

Again, we as a delegation would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the life-saving work done before, during, and after Hurricane Irma's impact; however, we would like to make certain that FEMA is aware of these urgent concerns of Members of the Florida delegation.

Sincerely,

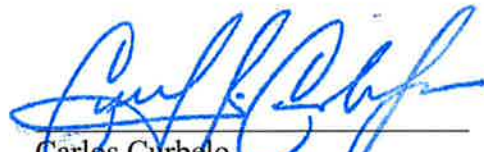

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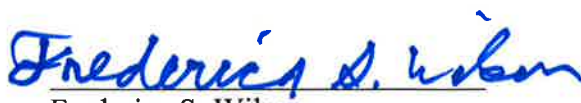

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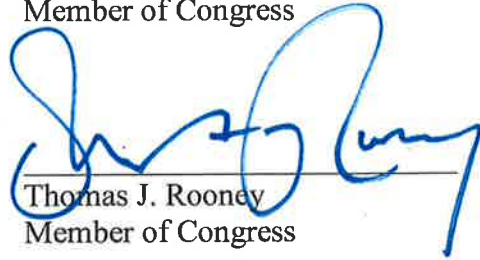
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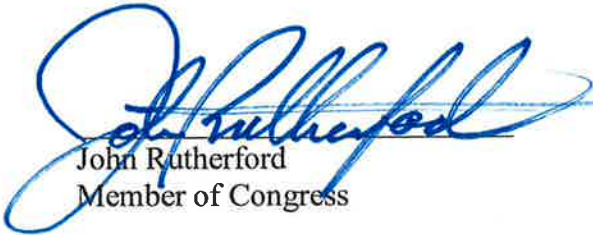
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