United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

11/26/2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Colleagues,

As Senators representing states that were devastated by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, we urge you to swiftly respond to the Biden Administration's supplemental funding request. The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) request for $98 billion in supplemental disaster appropriations is an important first step toward securing the assistance our communities need. We are encouraged that the Senate Committee on Appropriations held a hearing with key federal agencies on November 20th to review disaster funding needs. The message was clear: disaster relief cannot wait any longer. We urge you to bring a robust supplemental appropriations bill to the floor the first week of December.

Private businesses, non-profits, and regular citizens across the Southeast immediately got to work saving their neighbors and rebuilding their communities. Local, state, and federal partners also stepped up and answered the call to help. Now, it is Congress's turn to respond decisively by providing impacted areas and states with the resources they need to fully recover.

Across the Southeastern United States, Hurricane Helene is estimated to have caused $250 billion in damages, and Hurricane Milton is expected to have caused $50 billion in damages.[1] Tragically, approximately 261 people lost their lives as a result of both hurricanes.[2] Major urban centers, such as Asheville, North Carolina, only received steady access to potable drinking water

[1] Science Magazine. "Daunting Hurricane: Battered Researchers Assess Damage from Helene and Milton." Science, 2023, https://www.science.org/content/article/daunting-hurricane-battered-researchers-assess-damage-helene-and-milton#%3A~%3Atext%3DBy%20some%20estimates%2C%20Hurricane%20Helene%2Ccaused%20an%20additional%20%2450%20billion

[2] The Washington Post. "Hurricane Helene's Death Toll in North Carolina." The Washington Post, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/interactive/2024/hurricane-helene-death-toll-north-carolina/.

on November 18th,[3] and major thoroughfares of commerce like Interstate 40 remain impassible and have sustained significant damage.[4]

Our constituents need immediate help as they work to rebuild their homes and communities. We have delayed too long already. We therefore request that Congress act immediately to provide for those in need. We stand ready to pass a supplemental disaster relief bill the first week of December.

Sincerely,

Ted Budd
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

[3] CNN. "7 weeks after Helene, Asheville now has safe drinking water," CNN, 2024 https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/16/us/asheville-north-carolina-water-helene/index.html

[4] Smoky Mountain News. (2024, October 18). The long road ahead: NCDOT begins process toward massive I-40 repairs following Helene. Smoky Mountain News. https://smokymountainnews.com/news/item/38530-the-long-road-ahead-ncdot-begins-process-toward-massive-i-40-repairs-following-helene