

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

May 31, 2019

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

With June 1st serving as the official start to the 2019 Atlantic hurricane season, I write to respectfully reiterate my request for the administration to conduct a thorough review of all existing federal regulations that can be relaxed to yield more effective and well-organized hurricane relief and response efforts. Within the past three years, we witnessed Hurricanes Hermine, Matthew, Irma and Michael cause unprecedented destruction across the state of Florida. Many Floridians to this day seek a return to normalcy. As we continue to rebuild lives in communities impacted by these hurricanes, we also must look forward to addressing remaining inefficiencies to ensure a more robust federal response for the next disaster. As you know, coordinated efforts across all federal agencies are of the utmost importance to an effective and timely disaster response.

Too many Americans face a confusing and disjointed recovery process when confronted with the post-storm recovery process. Individuals, businesses, local governments, and nonprofit organizations in Florida must be free to focus on safe preparations and post-recovery activities without bearing the burden of arduous federal regulations that can amplify recovery efforts. As the administration continues to focus on regulatory reform, I urge you to place continued attention on addressing regulations and rules that may impede affected individuals and communities following natural disasters.

The health and safety needs of victims must be prioritized in carrying out disaster relief. To do so requires a thoughtful assessment and revision of bureaucratic rules and regulations that hamper relief efforts for storm survivors. Some previous examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must improve coordination with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Defense (DOD) when a major disaster declaration is issued, and use its authorities to the maximum extent possible to efficiently provide aid to persons and populations in need.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should move to fully enact Veterans Affairs Mission Act reforms so that veterans living in rural areas, such as the Florida Panhandle and the Florida Keys, have a full suite of medical service options available to them in

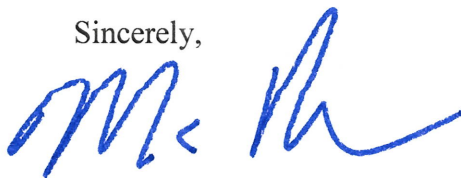
their own communities as roads and highways are impacted by debris, flooding, traffic, and emergency response activities.

- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should explore disaster policies whereby drone regulations can be temporarily and safely lifted during disaster declarations to facilitate emergency relief efforts, such as helping victims obtain medications when the roads to their homes are blocked.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should ensure that there are sufficient protections in place for residents of HUD-assisted properties to prevent them from being forced back into living conditions that may have been made unsafe and unsanitary following a disaster.
- The Department of Agriculture (USDA) should consider an indefinite freeze on the proposed rule that would force all stores accepting food stamps to offer more food choices, including gas station convenience stores that are more likely to open quickly and be accessible following a disaster.
- The Department of Labor (DOL) should look to provide more flexibility to ensure that business reporting requirements do not paralyze businesses and workers whose most immediate priority should be providing assistance.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) should expediently delay filing deadlines when necessary and consider rule reforms that enable disaster victims to make penalty-free early withdrawals from 401(k) and other retirement accounts.

As your administration continues to identify and review existing presidential authorities needed to provide essential regulatory relief, I respectfully request that you work directly with my office and the State of Florida to ease any other regulatory burdens associated with federal disaster relief and recovery that may require congressional assistance.

On behalf of Floridians, and Americans nationwide, that may be impacted during this year's hurricane season, thank you for your consideration to these important issues.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator