

By Senator Rich

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Senate Memorial

A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging the review and reorganization of Federal Emergency Management Agency policies and administrative procedures for the purpose of avoiding delays in cleanup and reimbursement in the aftermath of declared disasters.

WHEREAS, in the summer of 2004, the State of Florida endured an unprecedented incidence of four consecutive hurricanes striking the state in a period of 2 months, causing enormous destruction to property and infrastructure and leaving 70 people dead throughout the state, and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 2005, the State of Florida again endured an incidence of four consecutive hurricanes striking the state in a period of 4 1/2 months, causing enormous destruction to property and infrastructure and leaving 67 people dead throughout the state, and

WHEREAS, though much reconstruction and rebuilding has been accomplished in the aftermath of Hurricanes Frances, Charley, Jeanne, and Ivan, many Florida communities are continuing to struggle with rebuilding efforts, and

WHEREAS, during the recovery process, the Governor's Office has worked diligently in securing funds for our state from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and

WHEREAS, though the Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided much-needed assistance, many South Florida communities are currently being required to submit to new, needlessly restrictive bureaucratic policies in order to obtain relief from the agency, and

1 WHEREAS, as a result of these new bureaucratic
2 policies, South Florida communities are now confronted with
3 unnecessary regulatory hurdles in obtaining FEMA funds that
4 have delayed cleanup efforts and badly needed federal
5 reimbursements and that continue to negatively impact the
6 lives of Florida citizens, and

7 WHEREAS, under the new FEMA policies and administrative
8 processes, instead of appropriate local governments acting as
9 a conduit for management and disbursement of FEMA moneys and
10 debris removal, each private community or homeowners'
11 association is required to apply for such assistance on its
12 own, in effect making it impossible for a city to obtain a
13 blanket reimbursement to cover its cleanup costs for the
14 city's entire jurisdiction, and

15 WHEREAS, under these new policies, municipalities such
16 as the City of Coconut Creek have been advised that they will
17 not be reimbursed by FEMA for cleanup services provided to
18 private communities within the municipality, whether gated or
19 otherwise, and have been instructed to advise such private
20 communities to manage their debris removal and apply on an
21 individual basis to FEMA for reimbursement, a process that is
22 both administratively and operationally unsound, and

23 WHEREAS, certain legislative districts in the state
24 encompass nearly 100 condominium and homeowners' associations,
25 and many South Florida communities, such as Weston, are
26 composed almost entirely of private communities, and

27 WHEREAS, these private communities are not equipped or
28 prepared to undertake the FEMA application process and manage
29 the level of administrative detail required under the new FEMA
30 policies and processes, and

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1 WHEREAS, faced with the task of applying for, securing,
2 and managing FEMA funds on their own, many private communities
3 will experience significant delays in receiving funding or in
4 some cases may not obtain FEMA reimbursement under these
5 policies at all, and

6 WHEREAS, besides creating a bureaucratic nightmare, the
7 new FEMA guidelines pose an enormous problem for local
8 government solid waste management systems, and

9 WHEREAS, South Florida municipalities have the proven
10 ability to provide citywide coordination of such large-scale
11 cleanup efforts and can best provide an economy of scale as
12 well as the most reasonable cost for these services, and

13 WHEREAS, the need for solid waste removal does not
14 respect private community boundaries, and citizens expect
15 their local governments to provide these services regardless
16 of where they are located, and

17 WHEREAS, in a city such as Orlando, which operates its
18 own solid waste system, the new FEMA policy means that the
19 city would have to obtain reimbursement for cleanup through
20 each homeowners' association or condominium association for
21 areas that the city is already obligated to serve, and

22 WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the citizens of
23 this state for local municipalities to be granted jurisdiction
24 for the application and management of FEMA funds in the
25 aftermath of a declared disaster, as has been the case in the
26 past following other devastating hurricanes, and

27 WHEREAS, it is imperative that the Federal Emergency
28 Management Agency reorganize its current policies and
29 administrative processes in order to avoid further delays in
30 ongoing cleanup and reimbursement efforts resulting from
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1 | Hurricanes Frances, Charley, Jeanne, and Ivan, and to avoid
2 | such delays in the future, NOW, THEREFORE,

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4 | Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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6 | That the Congress of the United States is urged to
7 | initiate the review and reorganization of Federal Emergency
8 | Management Agency policies and administrative processes for
9 | the purpose of avoiding delays in cleanup and reimbursement in
10 | the aftermath of declared disasters.

11 | BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
12 | dispatched to the President of the United States, to the
13 | President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the
14 | United States House of Representatives, and to each member of
15 | the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

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