

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 2, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Office of the Majority Leader
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor,

We write to urge you to reinstate Congress' longstanding approach to emergency funding for national disasters and abandon this new policy of requiring budgetary offsets before funding is approved. If this was the policy after Hurricane Katrina, survivors would have been waiting for months or even years for assistance. The federal government has been instrumental in helping Gulf Coast citizens with the hard work of rebuilding their communities. Make no mistake: The recovery of the Gulf Coast would have been impossible without federal investment. We must remember this lesson as we seek to address today's disasters—the spring tornadoes, floods, and most recently, Hurricane Irene.

As communities on the east coast contend with the considerable damage caused by Hurricane Irene, it is imperative that Congress responds swiftly to this disaster. We should make it clear to affected families that their government will be there to help—just as it has always helped American families after disasters. This session, you stated that Congress must cut the budgets of valuable federal programs to fund emergency relief. Reaching agreement on funding cuts is a contentious exercise, as evidenced earlier this year when our government was driven to the brink of shutdown and default. We have already seen the result of subjecting disaster funding to the politics of partisan budget cutting.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) budget is pushed to its limits. As a result, last weekend, FEMA announced a shift to "immediate needs funding" to focus on its response to Hurricane Irene and preserve what little disaster funding it has on hand. This announcement means new rebuilding projects will be delayed nationwide. When Congress is asked to provide supplemental funds to pay for Irene and other ongoing disaster response efforts, we must respond expeditiously. It would be irresponsible and heartless for this body to delay recovery projects while Members fight over cuts. Congress must put the needs of American disaster victims *above* its budget squabbles.

We call on you to assure the American people that the federal government remains a committed partner in helping to restore communities in the wake of natural disasters. We strongly urge you to make it clear that budgetary offsets will not be required prior to emergency funding.

Sincerely,

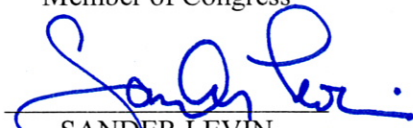



CEDRIC RICHMOND
Member of Congress




JOHN LARSON
Member of Congress

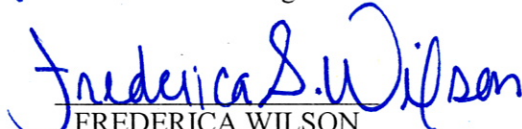

BENNIE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

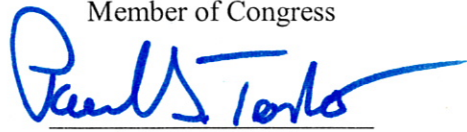

SANDER LEVIN
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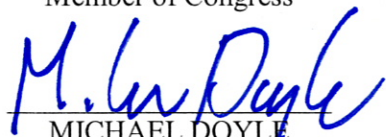

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ROSA DELAURO
Member of Congress

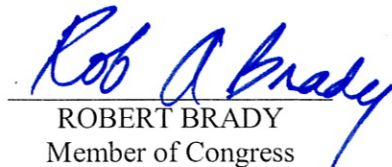

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FREDERICA WILSON
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PAUL TONKO
Member of Congress

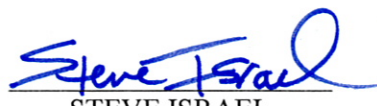

MICHAEL DOYLE
Member of Congress

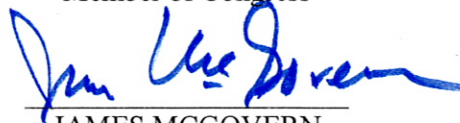

KAREN BASS
Member of Congress

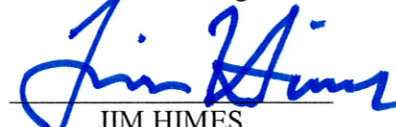

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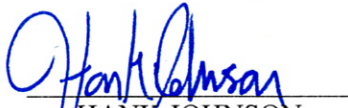

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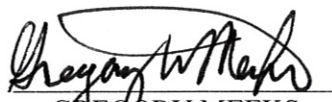

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KATHY HOCHUL
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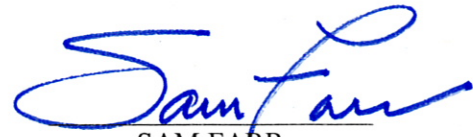

GARY ACKERMAN
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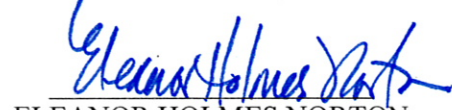

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GREGORY MEEKS
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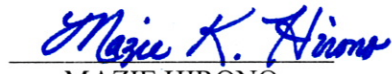

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SAM FARR
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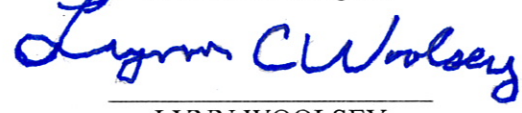

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
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MAZIE HIRONO
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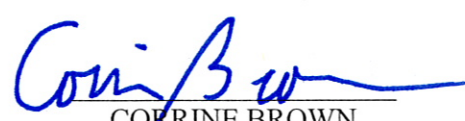

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JIM MORAN
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LYNN WOOLSEY
Member of Congress

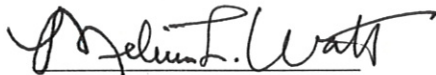

GWEN MOORE
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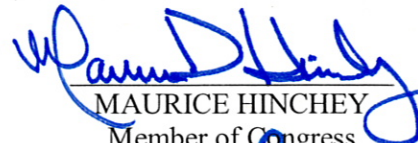

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