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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025  
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September 15, 2011

CHARLES J. HOUY, STAFF DIRECTOR  
BRUCE EVANS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

In 2011, we have had record flooding on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and other rivers in the Midwest and the Northeast, devastating tornados in the South, wildfires in the South and West, and now Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Since January 1, the President has issued disaster declarations in 48 states.... and the hurricane season is not yet over.

Congress has a responsibility to budget for disaster relief programs so that the victims of disasters can trust that their government will be a responsible partner in responding to and recovering from disasters. Disaster victims should not be victimized twice, first by Mother nature and then by politics in Washington, D.C.

I was disturbed to learn that the Republican House leadership is insisting on identifying offsets for disaster relief spending before we can appropriate the money necessary to fund the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund and to the Corps of Engineers. The Budget Control Act, which the President signed on August 2, 2011 after lengthy negotiations with you and your colleagues in the House, specifically provides a mechanism to finance disaster relief activities. The disaster relief bill that the Senate is voting on this week provides \$6.9 billion for critical disaster relief programs, consistent with the fiscal discipline established in the Budget Control Act, a measure that you voted for.

The FEMA Disaster Relief Fund is operating on fumes. The current balance is below \$351 million – and that balance is shrinking every day. FEMA has already put on hold over \$387 million of disaster recovery projects in 40 States, including Ohio. That means funding to rebuild schools, hospitals, roads, and public utilities from past disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike, the Mississippi River flood of 2008, the Tennessee flood of 2010, and the tornados in Missouri and Alabama, are on hold. That means that the thousands of people who would be constructing those facilities are not working.

I understand that it is your plan to partially fund a limited number of disaster relief programs in a continuing resolution for six weeks. Mr. Speaker, you cannot budget for disaster relief in six week segments. Disaster recovery does not work that way. Our governors, mayors,

and county commissioners have to make decisions on what to rebuild and when. They cannot make responsible decisions if the Federal government is only making funds available in a six week continuing resolution. You have been a businessman. I am sure you would not sign a contract to rebuild a school, or hire people to rebuild that school, if you knew that the Federal government could only commit to six weeks of funding. You cannot rebuild communities with six-week plans.

People who have lost their homes or lost their businesses, and communities that have lost their schools, roads, and power systems rightly expect the Federal government to be a responsible partner as they put their own resources towards this effort. I urge you to support the free standing, full year bill now being debated in the Senate to fully fund disaster relief programs, consistent with the provisions of the Budget Control Act to avoid any more delay.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu  
Chairman

Subcommittee on Homeland Security