

Message

From: Governor's Press Office [Governor'sPressOffice@eog.myflorida.com]
Sent: 11/15/2017 5:31:57 PM
Subject: Gov. Scott Urges Congress to Support Florida's Recovery from Hurricane Irma

Good afternoon,

As Florida continues to recover from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma, Governor Rick Scott today sent a letter to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker Paul Ryan urging Congress to immediately take action to provide Florida with the funding and support Floridians need and ensure the state's full recovery. Specifically, Governor Scott is requesting that Congress immediately act on the following:

- Pass a disaster relief package for Florida agriculture, including funding for the citrus industry;
- Fund the work of the Army Corps of Engineers on the Herbert Hoover Dike at Lake Okeechobee and expedite this critical federal project to be completed by 2022;
- Fund the federal share of Florida's cost to provide critical services to Puerto Rican families displaced by Hurricane Maria and now in Florida. Yesterday, as part of his 2018-19 Securing Florida's Future recommended budget, Governor Scott proposed \$12 million for the English Language Learners Summer Academies program to assist students from Puerto Rico that need additional support to learn English and focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and
- Reform the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to stop the program from losing billions of additional taxpayer dollars in future bailouts, improve the private market and facilitate savings for policyholders.

See the Governor's letter below or click [HERE](#).

Thanks,

Governor Rick Scott's Press Office

November 15, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan,

On the morning of September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall on Florida's Cudjoe Key as a powerful and deadly Category 4 hurricane. Over the past two months, as Florida has responded to and now recovers from this devastating storm, we have identified critical areas in which the support of the federal government is essential to our full recovery. I hope that you will carefully review each of these critical topics and immediately take action to provide Florida with the funding and support Floridians need.

HURRICANE RELIEF FOR FLORIDA'S CITRUS INDUSTRY

Florida's iconic citrus industry is in jeopardy due to the absolute devastation of Hurricane Irma which damaged nearly every grove in our state. The damage caused by Irma is compounded by the fact that many of Florida's orange groves are already reeling from a crop-killing disease known as citrus greening. Impacts to Florida's citrus industry have national consequences. Florida ranks highest in the nation in value of production for oranges and accounts for 57 percent of total U.S. citrus production. In Florida, we know how important it is to support our citrus growers and that's why earlier this month I announced a more than \$21 million proposed investment, which has to be approved by the Florida Legislature, in Florida's citrus industry. This funding includes:

- \$10 million for citrus research to find solutions to citrus greening, a disease that has compounded devastation to our state's citrus crop;
- \$4 million to support Department of Citrus consumer awareness efforts to support the market for Florida citrus and orange juice; and
- \$7 million for the Citrus Health Response Program, which helps ensure that growers are able to replant healthy citrus trees that were destroyed by Hurricane Irma, and helps minimize the spread of citrus greening.

I also activated a \$25 million Florida Citrus Emergency Loan Program. This program provides short-term loans to citrus growers that experienced damages during the storm to "bridge the gap" between the time Hurricane Irma hit and when growers receive payments on insurance claims and/or federal disaster assistance.

While I continue to be 100 percent committed to helping citrus growers recover from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma, the state cannot do this alone. As you may know, I recently visited Washington D.C. to personally advocate for Congress to pass a disaster relief package for Florida agriculture, including funding for the citrus industry. These federal investments are critical to the recovery and success of Florida's iconic citrus industry. I urge you to act today to give Florida's citrus growers the support they need. I truly hope you will be a partner with us in ensuring the future success of this iconic industry that is a major part of Florida's economy.

FUNDING CRITICAL REPAIRS TO THE FEDERAL HERBERT HOOVER DIKE

For more than 30 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has identified areas of the federally-operated Herbert Hoover Dike that are in critical need of repair. Immediate action to repair the Dike is essential as this structure not only provides flood protection to millions of Floridians in Southeast and Southwest Florida, but also keeps the nutrient rich waters of Lake Okeechobee in the lake so that discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries do not continue to occur. With the Dike in its current state of disrepair, the Corps has been forced to authorize massive discharges into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries to keep water levels on the lake low. These discharges

create significant issues in the form of toxic algae blooms that threaten the health of Florida families and wildlife, harm our iconic beaches and waterways and negatively impact tourism in communities across the state.

At the state level, I have already fought for and secured \$50 million in state funding to speed repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike – becoming the first Florida governor to invest state dollars to expedite repairs to this federal project. To build on this investment, I recently announced that I am proposing to invest an additional \$50 million of state funds to expedite this process. President Trump has committed to accelerate repairs and it is imperative that Congress supports this and acts on this federal project.

Currently, the projected completion date for this project is 2025 and it continues to be delayed due to lack of funding. Congress needs to act immediately to fund the work of the Corps and expedite this critical federal project to be completed by 2022 to keep Floridians safe and protect our environment.

CONTINUING RELIEF FOR DISPLACED FAMILIES FROM PUERTO RICO

Following Hurricane Maria's devastating impact to Puerto Rico, I have been fully committed to taking every possible action to help our Puerto Rican neighbors and provide relief and assistance to displaced families coming to Florida. I have visited Puerto Rico twice at the invitation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló to provide assistance as they work to recover from this storm. Since October 3, 2017, Florida has welcomed more than 150,000 Puerto Ricans displaced by Maria and we have made it a priority to support them during this time of need. With Florida's designation as a host state granted by the Trump Administration, we are in the process of compiling the financial impact in Florida to accommodate these individuals, including education and health services. At my direction, the Florida Division of Emergency Management continues to operate Disaster Relief Centers at Orlando International Airport and Miami International Airport to assist Puerto Rican families and provide them the resources and guidance they need as they arrive in our state. Florida has also taken significant action to waive fees and ensure displaced families have every opportunity to get a job and ensure their children are enrolled in school.

Last week, following Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offering Transitional Sheltering Assistance to Puerto Rican families in Florida, I have directed the Florida Division of Emergency Management to upgrade the activation status of the State Emergency Operations Center to Level 2. This will ensure that local, state and federal agencies are all working together, support more efficient and coordinated delivery of resources and greater planning as we respond to the needs of these families.

Additionally, I am proposing a \$12 million English Language Learners Summer Academies program to assist students that need additional support to learn English, including a focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As my Administration continues to work closely with FEMA and the White House, we will also keep you updated on our efforts and the cost associated with these services.

REFORMING THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is in desperate need of reform. Since the inception of the NFIP, Florida policyholders have paid in excess of \$16 billion in premiums, but collected only approximately \$4.5 billion in claims reimbursements, which equates to approximately

a 4 to 1 ratio of premiums paid to claims reimbursements. Additionally, the NFIP should immediately share its more than 50 years of “proprietary” data with states and private insurers to ensure a fair market and that rates are not excessive or unfair and discriminatory. It is vital that Congress pass a reformed NFIP in order to stop it from losing billions of additional taxpayer dollars in future bailouts, improve the private market and facilitate savings for policyholders.

The issues I have outlined are essential to the long-term wellbeing, safety and prosperity of the people of Florida. I urge you to closely review these important topics and act immediately to provide assistance to your fellow Americans in Florida as we continue to recover from Irma. Please let me know what I can do to assist you in your efforts in Washington to secure the critical funding I have outlined and please keep me updated on any progress you make in this important endeavor to assist your fellow Americans in Florida.

Sincerely,

Rick Scott
Governor