

Braley Urges FEMA to Reconsider Denial of Increased Federal Share for Iowa Recovery

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Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) sent a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in response to the FEMA's denial of Iowa's request to increase the federal cost share for Iowa disaster recovery.

"I'm extremely disappointed and very frustrated that FEMA denied Iowa's request to increase the federal share of disaster recovery funding," Braley said. "The enormous scale of this year's flooding has made it virtually impossible for many Iowa communities to pay their share of disaster costs, making increased federal funding necessary to speed recovery and relieve communities already stretched to the breaking point. I will continue pressuring FEMA to increase their share of the rebuilding efforts so that Iowa communities have the help they need to rebuild."

In the wake of Iowa's floods and natural disasters, the federal share of disaster assistance is currently set at 90 percent federal / 10 percent local for emergency protective measures assistance (FEMA Category B). All other FEMA assistance, including debris removal and road repair, is set at 75 percent federal / 25 percent local.

Braley, along with other members of Iowa's congressional delegation, sent letters to President Bush in June and July requesting an increased federal funding share for Iowa's recovery efforts. The letters echoed the Governor's request that FEMA eliminate the local cost share requirement for debris removal and emergency protective measures (FEMA funding categories A and B), and increase the federal cost share from 75 percent to 90 percent for all other FEMA disaster relief.

Yesterday, FEMA notified the Iowa delegation that Iowa's request for further increases in federal funding was denied. The letter from FEMA Administrator Paulison is attached. The text of Braley's letter is attached and below:

August 15, 2008

Dear Administrator Paulison,

I read with frustration and disappointment your letter to Governor Culver, dated August 14, 2008, denying the state of Iowa's request for 100 percent Federal reimbursement for Categories A and B and a 90 percent Federal reimbursement for Categories C-G. As you know, I and the rest of the Iowa Congressional Delegation supported the Governor's request in letters to the President dated June 17, 2008 and July 18, 2008.

The current status of the Federal reimbursement is making it virtually impossible for many Iowa communities to fully recover. The amount of damage in Iowa due to the recent floods and tornados is unprecedented, and the current Federal reimbursement is simply not enough to allow these communities to clean up and rebuild. I am very disappointed that FEMA is denying adequate funding to these communities based on seemingly arbitrary thresholds.

While I understand that FEMA regulations set certain thresholds before triggering a more appropriate Federal reimbursement, I also believe it is important to look at the impacts of this threshold on the citizens of Iowa. Communities have been unable to remove the vast amounts of debris because of a cost-prohibitive Federal reimbursement. Much

needed clean-up and repair is being delayed, and essential facilities are struggling to find the funds to make urgent, emergency repairs. Your denial of a more appropriate Federal reimbursement is a slap in the face to these communities, and one more example of government red tape standing in the way of American citizens looking to rebuild their lives.

I was under the impression, based on your personal visit to the flood- and tornado-ravaged areas of my District, that you had a deep appreciation for these acute needs and would exercise your discretion as FEMA Director to expedite the approval of a higher Federal reimbursement. Every time my staff or I visit Parkersburg, the status of the Federal reimbursement is the first question we hear from concerned constituents.

I strongly urge you to reconsider your denial of the state of Iowa's requests, and to take action as soon as possible to set a more appropriate Federal reimbursement. There is no reason that Iowa communities should be forced to wait for a bureaucratic threshold to be triggered before cleaning up their communities.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you in the next 5 business days.

Sincerely,

Bruce Braley

Member of Congress