



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 2, 2005

The Honorable R. David Paulison  
Acting Under Secretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response  
Acting Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW, Suite 828  
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Director Paulison:

We write to request that FEMA approve direct federal assistance at 100% federal funding for debris removal, emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities for the Florida Counties previously approved for a 75% reimbursement level: Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Indian River, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Okeechobee, Osceola, Palm Beach, Polk, St. Lucie and Sarasota.

As you know, Wilma is the eighth hurricane to hit Florida in 15 months and the second hurricane to hit Miami-Dade and Broward Counties in two months. Many of our counties were forced to evacuate their citizens up to eight times because of hurricane watches and warnings posted by the National Hurricane Center, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars. Over the past several months, the stream of emergency expenses that have had to be borne by our local governments has simply been staggering.

In late August, Hurricane Katrina hit the State of Florida. Eleven counties were declared eligible for public assistance, but only at the 75% level. In mid-September, Tropical Storm Rita impacted Broward, Collier, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, but again the counties were only eligible for public assistance at the 75% level.

Both FEMA and the insurance industry predict that Hurricane Wilma will become the third most costly storm in U.S. history, behind only Andrew and Katrina. The cost to Miami-Dade County alone, our largest county, may reach one billion dollars.

At 75%, that equals a quarter-billion dollars that must be paid by local governments in just one county. But these additional costs put a terrible burden on

the people in large and small counties alike, at precisely the time when local governments face the greatest needs and the greatest strains on their ability to meet those needs.

The law requires that FEMA pay a minimum 75% reimbursement rate to local governments. However, FEMA has the discretion to set the limit higher, and there is ample precedent for our request. Keeping in mind that reimbursement rates were not completely uniform for all expenses in previous disasters, FEMA reimbursed 100% of New York's costs after the September 11 attacks, 100% for Hurricane Andrew in Florida in 1992, and 90% of California's costs after the Northridge earthquake.

For these reasons, we ask that you use the discretion available to you under the law and approve our request. Thank you for your kind attention to this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

Kerith B. Mah

Gary Brown & Co.

Allen Boyd

Jim Keller

Jim Davis

Carrie Mack

Robert Welch

Mark Foley

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Aneta Brunske

Paula Perry

Carrie Brown