

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

May 17, 2023

The Honorable Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Administrator Criswell,

As you know, seven named storms made landfall in Louisiana between 2020 and 2021, causing extensive power outages and widespread damage to coastal and inland communities. In response to these disasters, affected local governments and utility cooperatives took quick action and leaned into the recovery process. However, the Louisiana delegation remains concerned by ongoing reimbursement delays that have significantly impacted the financial stability of utility cooperatives and units of local government in our state.

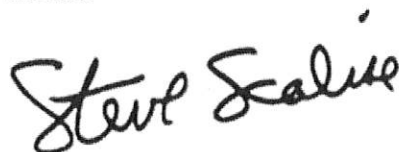
After a federally declared disaster, many communities and utility cooperatives take out lines of credit to cover the costs of providing timely disaster response. While these activities – such as emergency protective measures, debris removal, utility service restoration, and permanent work – should be considered PA-eligible undertakings qualified for reimbursement under the Stafford Act, in practice the payment processing timeline can leave eligible entities in an unworkable financial position. Loans or lines of credit are routinely used to close the gap. Unfortunately, this means that any delays in FEMA's processing of reimbursements can result in significant financial burdens for public assistance recipients. As time goes on and interest on these loans accrue, the cost of recovery continues to grow.

We request that FEMA commit to cover the cost of qualifying interest for local governments and utility cooperatives in Louisiana affected by these processing delays. This will help alleviate the financial strain on these public assistance recipients, allowing them to continue providing essential services to their communities. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to improve the disaster recovery process.

Respectfully,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Senator



Steve Scalise  
Member of Congress



John Kennedy  
Senator



Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress



Garret Graves  
Member of Congress



Mike Johnson  
Member of Congress



Julia Letlow, PhD  
Member of Congress



Troy Carter  
Member of Congress