

## United States Senate

September 5, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20150

Dear Leader Schumer:

On Wednesday, August 30, Hurricane Idalia made its catastrophic landfall in Florida's Big Bend near Keaton Beach as a major, Category 3 hurricane. Just days after this storm cut through my state, I met with President Joe Biden in Live Oak, Florida, to talk with him one-on-one about the need to pass my *Federal Disaster Responsibility Act*. I thanked the president for his quick action to approve Florida's request for both a pre-landfall disaster declaration that helped local law enforcement respond and a subsequent major disaster declaration, but also made clear that there is much more work to be done.

Unfortunately, it is my understanding that at least one member of the Senate Democratic Caucus plans to block the immediate passage of this legislation to provide Americans with urgently needed relief unless it is accompanied by foreign aid for Ukraine. Such action by a member of the Senate, especially one whose state has an active [major disaster declaration](#), is senseless and incredibly harmful to our fellow Americans fighting to recover from devastating disasters. We cannot allow this to happen.

Last week, I saw firsthand the damage caused across Florida's Big Bend by Hurricane Idalia's devastating wind speeds, historic storm surge, and heavy rainfall which severely impacted substantial portions of the state with significant flooding and massive power outages. Floridians are resilient, but recovery doesn't fall just on these families – it's an all-hands-on-deck operation that requires the federal government to show up today, tomorrow and every day until the job is done. The *Federal Disaster Responsibility Act* will deliver on that commitment for families in Florida, California, Hawaii, and in communities across the United States fighting to recover from major federal disasters by passing several important provisions, which include:

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- Fully funding the immediate needs of FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund with at least \$16.5 billion to ensure the federal government can uphold its obligation to quickly deploy emergency funding and resources to communities and Americans impacted by natural disasters. This exceeds what the Biden administration has said is needed to respond to recent disasters, including those in Florida and Hawaii.
- Ensuring final passage of the bipartisan *Block Grant Assistance Act* which provides needed authority for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to issue block grants to Florida's citrus growers, Georgia's peach growers and all U.S. agriculture producers devastated by natural disasters in 2022.
- Securing final passage of an expanded version of the *Hurricane Tax Relief Act*, which takes care of Americans impacted by disasters by providing disaster-loss tax relief to families who have been impacted by qualified disasters for purposes of enhanced disaster casualty loss tax relief. This would apply across the nation and include relief for taxpayers in Hawaii, California, Illinois, Florida and others. This bill modifies the deduction for personal casualty losses in the hurricane disaster areas, waiving the requirements for impacted taxpayers to itemize deductions and to have losses that exceed 10% of adjusted gross income. Congress previously extended this tax relief for hurricanes Irma, Wilma, Dorian, and Michael, amongst others.
- Committing necessary funds and resources to Florida's military installations to fully rebuild and recover from hurricane damage.

We are all aware that disasters do not discriminate in the damage they cause. Any one of our states could face an emergency at any time and the federal government must be prepared to show up and deliver relief to Americans impacted by these events.

The Senate must make clear to the American people that Washington won't play games with disaster relief funds or make helping Americans contingent on helping foreign causes, which require more debate and scrutiny. We can and must pass this bill this week and I urge your full support and immediate action to get this done.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott  
United States Senator