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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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March 4, 2014

Mr. W. Craig Fugate  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Dear Administrator Fugate,

We are writing to you today to acknowledge the work FEMA has done to implement the direct tribal disaster declaration provision of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA), P.L. 113-2 [Sec. 1110], but to also strongly encourage faster action, more outreach and better communication with tribal nations as guidance is developed.

As the original authors of legislation to amend the Stafford Act to allow the Chief Executive of a federally recognized tribe to make a direct request to the President for a major disaster or emergency declaration, we recognized the importance of promoting tribal sovereignty and highlighting the pressing needs of tribal communities. As with any new federal provision, guidance from the relevant agency is an important step in ensuring the policy is applied consistently across the country. We are disturbed by the long delay in promulgating guidance and urge FEMA to move quickly to finalize it.

Following the release of draft guidance, FEMA must move swiftly to implement an effective outreach strategy that recognizes the unique needs of different Tribes across the country. Tribal communities range in membership, geography, and organizational structure and a "one size fits all" approach to consultation will not produce meaningful feedback. As members of both the HSGAC and Appropriations Subcommittees with jurisdiction over FEMA we are keenly aware of the need for adequate resources to conduct critical outreach and we urge you to keep us informed of any resource gaps that may affect your ability to meet your required targets.

While consultation with tribal communities on the SRIA provisions is the most urgent matter at hand, FEMA must sustain its efforts to work with Alaska Native

Mr. W. Craig Fugate

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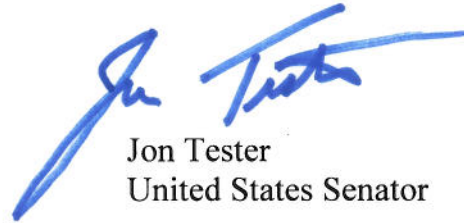
and Native American tribes. In order to ensure tribal communities are true partners in the emergency management community, we urge FEMA to hire full-time, tribal liaisons for each FEMA region. As members of both the Committee on Indian Affairs and the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, we are uniquely positioned to advocate on behalf of tribal communities across the country and understand each FEMA region must approach outreach differently. By positioning a tribal liaison in each region, communities can be active partners and provide localized expertise on disaster related issues. They must be involved in the development and execution of policy from the beginning and cannot simply be used to validate decisions made internally at FEMA.

We appreciate the work FEMA has done to address the unique needs of Alaska Native and Native American tribal communities and we look forward to working with your Agency as new policies are implemented. Thank you again for your efforts and please contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator