

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today signed a letter to President Barack Obama and FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate urging funds for the severe flooding that struck Western New York last week.

“Our neighbors have watched the foundations of their homes wash away and I am committed to doing everything I can to help,” said Rep. Slaughter. “I am proud to work with my colleagues in Western New York to obtain necessary funding to help our neighbors clean up, rebuild and restore their homes and communities.”

A full text of the letter is included below.

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear President Obama and Administrator Fugate:

We write today to urge expeditious approval of New York State's request for a federal disaster declaration for Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chenango, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Erie, Genesee, Rensselaer and Sullivan counties, following the severe flooding that has ravaged the state in recent weeks. This declaration would make communities in at least these 10 New York counties and their residents eligible for federal assistance. Based on damage assessments

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conducted by state and federal emergency personnel, New York State Governor David A. Paterson has determined that the cost of recovery is beyond the capacity of the state and local governments. Federal assistance is urgently needed to help these communities recuperate.

Since July 29th, severe summer storms have wreaked havoc on the lives, homes, and businesses of residents throughout New York. Just days ago, heavy thunderstorms and severe flooding caused widespread damage across New York: overturning foundations of homes and businesses, crippling water and wastewater systems, and rendering main thoroughfares impassable. Residents have been evacuated from their homes, and in Western New York, the Tri-County Memorial Hospital sustained extensive damages requiring Red Cross officials to set up a field hospital at a local athletic field in order to treat patients. Flooding has hit the Village of Gowanda in Erie County particularly hard, leading to the tragic loss of 2 lives in the small community.

Early damage estimates collected in several New York counties indicate that federal assistance will be necessary to aid in recovery efforts. Early Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) conducted thus far have found damage costs which already double the \$24.8 million federal threshold for statewide costs to local and state governments. With the costs still climbing, many of the affected communities simply cannot bear the financial burden on their own. To date, several hundred homes have sustained major damages or have been completely destroyed. As increased damages are revealed each hour and communities begin to pick up the pieces from the storm's wreckage, we strongly encourage the swift arrival of federal assistance for the affected counties.

We therefore support New York State's request for a major disaster declaration to provide federal relief to both local governments and individual residents. As communities begin to address the widespread destruction and property loss left in the wake of these storms, we must ensure that every possible resource is made available to those teams and communities working to recover. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance.

Signed,

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter

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U.S. Representative Brian Higgins
U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey
U.S. Representative Chris Lee
U.S. Representative Eric Massa
U.S. Representative Scott Murphy
U.S. Representative Paul Tonko
U.S. Representative Michael Arcuri