

United States Senate

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June 20, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20050-0002

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Administration
500 C St SW Room 214
Washington, D.C. 20472-3198

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Fugate:

I am writing to urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to take steps immediately to support the disaster recovery effort underway in Montana and to use your respective authorities to find viable housing options for displaced families.

As you both know, the State of Montana determined that the flooding damage was so serious that it was beyond the capacities of the state, local, and tribal governments to sufficiently respond without federal assistance. On June 17, 2011 the President rightfully declared a state of emergency in Montana.

It is my understanding that the State Rural Development office has been diligently working to gather a list of vacant housing, financed through Rural Development's Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Program. With this work already underway, USDA and FEMA should promptly reach an understanding that the agencies will work together and share information to make housing available to persons displaced by the flooding which includes the process by which FEMA will make the properties available to disaster victims. Most importantly, the agencies should share information regarding known locations of disaster evacuees to expedite their relocation to a safe accommodation.

I have personally seen the generosity of Montanans who have sprung into action to help their neighbors, but I have also seen the damage firsthand. While folks are doing everything they can to help each other out, it's clear that we're going to need all federal resources available to help Montanans pick themselves up. I ask that USDA and FEMA quickly work together to cut down on the red tape to ensure viable housing options for Montana's families so those displaced by the floods can quickly get roofs over their heads.

It is essential that USDA and FEMA provide rural Montanans with quick assistance in response to these floods. I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to assist Montana during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
U.S. Senator