

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

July 13, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I write to urge you to quickly approve the State of Montana's request for a determination of eligibility for Individual Assistance to supplement the Presidential Disaster Declaration you declared on June 17, 2011.

Thousands of Montanans have suffered damage to their homes and businesses as the result of flooding this year. Prompt approval of this request will allow for federal grants and loans to affected homeowners and businesses, which will provide a critical helping hand to Montanans at this difficult time. A determination of eligibility for Individual Assistance would also make the Small Business Administration's full range of disaster loan programs available to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes affected by the disaster in those counties designated in the disaster declaration.

Please take every step possible to see that the State of Montana's request is quickly approved.

Additionally, please instruct federal agencies to immediately expedite delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance for which Montana is already eligible. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has conducted a statewide assessment of the damage caused by the flooding to individuals across Montana, and the need is substantial. Montanans are struggling to recover from flood damage and they need help now. Please instruct federal agencies to begin a full court press in Montana to get the word out about resources available to help and expedite delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance for which Montanans are eligible. For example:

Farmers and Ranchers

- *Rehabilitating Cropland*
Thousands of acres of irrigated cropland and crops were destroyed and thousands of acres of cropland will not be irrigated due to damage the flooding caused to pumpsites, ditches, and irrigation systems in Montana. The USDA's Emergency Conservation Program can provide funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by flooding. I urge you to direct the USDA to prioritize requests from Montana for assistance from within the USDA Emergency Conservation Program.

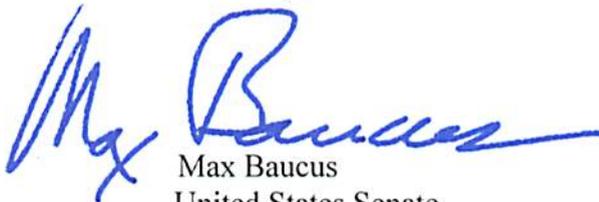
- *Recovering Agriculture Losses*
USDA can also assist Montana through the Emergency Loan Program (EL), which can help farmers and ranchers recover from production and physical losses due to natural disasters. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000. These loans can be used to replace farm equipment, pay for production costs, cover basic living expense, and refinance debt. Please direct the USDA to notify all producers affected by recent flooding of these options.
- *Irrigation Repair*
The Bureau of Reclamation has authority under a program created in 2009 to fund extraordinary maintenance such as repairing damage to aging irrigation infrastructure caused by flooding. This program is new and few producers are aware of how to take advantage of the program. Please direct the Bureau of Reclamation to work with eligible irrigation users in Montana to take advantage of this program in as expedited a manner as possible.

Homeowners and Small Businesses

- *Moratorium on foreclosures and forbearances*
Homeowners across Montana are also in need of help and the Department of Housing and Urban Development is in a good position to lend a hand. HUD has already granted a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures and forbearance on foreclosures of Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured home mortgages. Please direct HUD to conduct outreach to ensure homeowners that may be struggling are aware of this moratorium.
- *Loans for Housing and Economic Development*
HUD also offers state and local governments federally guaranteed loans for housing rehabilitation, economic development and repair of public infrastructure. I ask that representatives from HUD conduct outreach to homeowners to help improve awareness of these resources.
- *Low interest Disaster Loans*
The Small Business Administration can offer certain private, non-profit organizations support through the SBA's economic injury disaster loan program. Since the State has thus far declined to request the full range of disaster assistance available within SBA, please direct the SBA to conduct outreach to potential beneficiaries so that non-profit entities apply and benefit from the limited range of disaster programs available under the current disaster declaration.

Mr. President, Montanans are in need of an immediate, comprehensive and energetic full court press from all federal agencies to make sure Montanans receive help from every disaster program available. The time to act is now. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Max Baucus
United States Senate

CC: William Craig Fugate, FEMA Administrator