

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-218, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1001 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

As you know, the Midwest has been hard-hit by record flooding in recent months. Thousands of families have been displaced and the damage to homes, farms, businesses, schools, and critical infrastructure is projected to cost several billion dollars.

Recognizing the urgent need in the aftermath of the floods, you provided \$2.65 billion in disaster relief assistance in the FY09 Emergency Supplemental. While this funding has been critical to the beginning phase of the recovery process, additional disaster assistance is necessary to address the short- and long-term needs of the affected communities, especially in the area of public education.

In addition to other forms of disaster aid being considered, we respectfully request that you include education disaster assistance in the next disaster assistance package.

Flood damage to Midwestern schools alone is expected to reach nearly \$100 million, and as a result some schools will not open in the fall. Those schools able to open their doors are desperately trying to get ready for the upcoming school year, but repairs and cleanup are ongoing. Moreover, many schools will see an influx of flood-displaced students, while others will face financial challenges due to the loss of students, and a decline in property values.

It is also important to note that many of these schools are in rural areas, which face their own funding constraints that will only be further compounded by the flood damage.

We recently introduced H.R. 6377, the Midwest Schools Disaster Recovery Act, to assist schools impacted by the flooding. Similar to education legislation passed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, H.R. 6377 would provide flood-affected schools in Midwestern States with the resources and flexibility necessary to overcome many of the hurdles ahead on the road to recovery. We ask that you include direct education disaster assistance in line with this important legislation in the next disaster assistance package.

In addition, we urge you to include significant funding for the FEMA Community Disaster Loan (CDL) program. Midwest flooding destroyed millions of acres of crops, hurting local property tax revenue. Property tax is the major source of income for school districts, and the expected decline in property values in flood-affected areas poses a serious threat to future school budgets.

The CDL program was specifically designed for communities severely hit by disasters that subsequently experience a reduction in property value. Funds from the program should be made available to the flood-impacted schools in Midwestern States.

Without federal support, these schools will struggle to rebound from the flood. As the new school year approaches, a strong federal response to this situation is necessary to ensure that students continue to receive a high-quality education.

Again, thank you for your previous support for the communities affected by the 2008 Midwest floods. We look forward to your continued commitment to the recovery efforts and working with you in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



PHIL HARE
Member of Congress



DAVE LOEBSACK
Member of Congress

Cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
Majority Whip James Clyburn
Chairman George Miller, House Education & Labor Committee