

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2017

Office of Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

We are seeking clarity regarding the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM)'s hurricane debris removal efforts. We are frustrated that many of our concerns that have been communicated to your office have yet to be adequately addressed, and we are confused by reports that contradict the representations that you and your staff have made to us.

Our initial concerns stemmed from FDEM's stated refusal to submit to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the full amount of reimbursement requests made by communities that are being forced to pay higher rates because of debris removal companies refusing to honor contracts entered into before the storm at lower rates. While we agree that legal remedies must be pursued against the companies that breached their contracts, such remedies are not at odds with, and must be pursued concurrently with, ensuring that dangerous debris will be removed and localities will be made whole. FEMA has committed to do its part; now you and FDEM must do yours.

Given these concerns, and your office's unsatisfactory response to them, we were dumbfounded by reports that your administration, following non-public bidding, entered into contracts for debris removal in Monroe County at rates far higher than those negotiated before the hurricane. This action is clearly inconsistent with your office's refusal to facilitate reimbursement of contracts at higher rates negotiated by local jurisdictions. This inconsistency is even more egregious because of the fact that, unlike in the cases of cities and counties who had no options for reasonably priced debris removal after their initial contractors had fled, the state's spendthrift contracts reportedly displaced firms that were willing to honor contracts negotiated before the storm to remove debris from the very same communities in Monroe County.

Communities throughout Florida deserve an explanation, they deserve to have their debris removed expeditiously, and they deserve assurance that they will not be taken advantage of by those seeking to gain windfalls from the suffering of others – windfalls that reportedly your administration is unnecessarily paying. To those ends, we ask that you answer the following questions as soon as possible:


1. Why is your administration refusing to facilitate reimbursement for many local jurisdictions' debris removal costs above pre-disaster rates, yet paying similarly and in some cases much more excessive high rates for debris removal in other jurisdictions where contractors were willing to honor existing contracts at lower rates?
2. Will your administration be asking FEMA to reimburse the state of Florida the 90% federal share of the total costs incurred from the emergency debris removal contract executed in Monroe County? If so, why is FDEM refusing to facilitate FEMA reimbursements for similarly high rates incurred by other localities? If not, why is the state willing to pay 100% of debris removal costs under the contracts in Monroe County but not even 10% of the debris removal costs under the contracts entered into by localities?

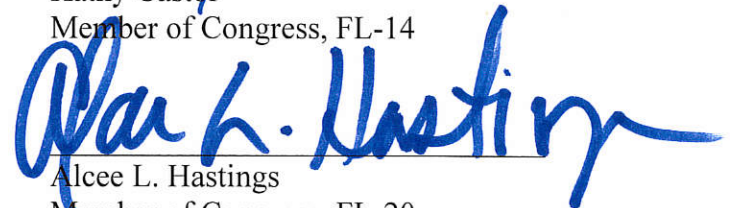
We look forward to your prompt response and hope your administration will work with us and with our communities to equitably expedite debris removal to protect the health and safety of all Floridians.

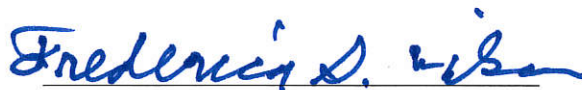
Sincerely,

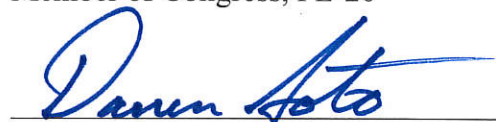

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress, FL-23


Kathy Castor
Member of Congress, FL-14


Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress, FL-10


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress, FL-20


Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress, FL-24


Darren Soto
Member of Congress, FL-09