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# United States Senate

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January 21, 2020

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

As Missouri braces for another flooding season, I am writing to understand what policies, preparation and guidance the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is considering to ensure Missourians' circumstances are properly understood and that their needs can be efficiently and effectively addressed.

I write as Missouri reels from heavy storms that hit across the state earlier this month, and as many residents continue to rebuild their lives following the devastating historic floods that hit the state last March and April. Although I am grateful for the hard work of the men and women of FEMA, particularly its urban search and rescue teams, I would be remiss if I did not mention serious concerns with FEMA's record on responding to Missourians' needs.

In particular, many Missourians, particularly in the northwest of the state, continue to face burdensome challenges with regard to the designation and distribution of Individual Assistance (IA). Not only have there been inconsistencies and opaqueness in determinations of who is awarded IA, but in a number of cases in which constituents were granted IA they were forced to repay it to FEMA due to bureaucratic errors.

The mishandling of IA is one example of a broader disregard by FEMA for the needs of Missourians. A recent article in *Mound City News* reported that the mishandling of assistance from FEMA caused "[t]hose without flood insurance [to] have been left with what they can scrape together and help from family and friends."<sup>1</sup>

That people have been forced to face traumatizing and life-changing circumstances due to flooding is bad enough. That they are then forced to deal with FEMA's bureaucratic errors and negligence is unacceptable.

In advance of this coming flood season, and in light of the above, I would appreciate your responses to the following questions:

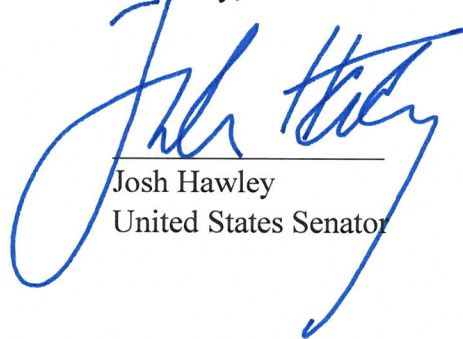
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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Sharkey, "Local officials fed up with system and want change," *Mound City News*, Vol. 140, No. 28., 9 January 2020, <http://www.moundcitynews.com> Accessed 13 January 2020.

- What policies will FEMA institute to ensure it is transparent with respect to the designation and distribution of Individual Assistance?
- How will FEMA alter its policies and preparations to ensure Missourians will not face the kinds of bureaucratic negligence and errors that have been reported during the 2019 flooding season?
- What processes and policies does FEMA have in place to ensure it is accurately assessing damage, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach parts of the state?
- How will FEMA improve its communication with local communities in advance of, during, and following disasters, in light of lessons learned during the 2019 flooding season?
- Given that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been slow to restore flood protection to pre-2019 levels, thereby leaving residents vulnerable, what steps is FEMA taking to mitigate the potential disaster? For instance, is FEMA pre-positioning resources in advance of expected storms?
- Some in the state have suggested Missouri will not be eligible for disaster aid from flooding in 2020 because the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has not repaired the levees. Is this accurate? Other than the sum of the financial losses, what data, such as stream gauges or flood maps, are considered to determine whether FEMA will provide assistance?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your responses and to ensuring that the needs of Missourians are being met in a timely and efficient manner.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator