

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 13, 2026

Chairman Sam Graves
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Andrew Garbarino
Homeland Security Committee
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Scott Perry
Economic Development, Public Buildings,
and Emergency Management
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Josh Brecheen
Oversight, Investigations, and
Accountability Subcommittee
Homeland Security Committee
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairmen Graves, Garbarino, Perry and Brecheen,

As the top Congressional leaders with oversight of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), it is within your jurisdiction to ensure our nation's disaster relief efforts are "fast, fair, and free from political bias," as Chairman Graves described.ⁱ That is why I call on you to launch an immediate investigation into President Trump's denial of a disaster declaration for four states that federal officials determined had met government thresholds for receiving aid.

During the period of February 22 to 23, 2026 the State of New Jersey, along with other states in the region, experience a devastating winter storm. Given the magnitude and severity of this event, Governor Sherrill requested a Major Disaster Declaration in April of 2026. On July 2, 2026, the White House denied the \$84.4 million Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation request. While Governor Sherrill is appealing this denial with my strong support, I am gravely concerned by the way in which this matter is being handled.

Recent reporting found that President Trump's rejections came after regional offices of the FEMA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration determined that the states met government thresholds for receiving aid.ⁱⁱ Not only is the denial in and of itself concerning, in response to this denial a FEMA spokesperson stated the following: "If the federal government is paying for regular operations like snow removal, what next? Garbage removal? The federal

government's role is not to fund routine functions." This winter storm was anything but routine. The blizzard that hit New Jersey during this period brought record-breaking snowfall, statewide travel bans, and hurricane force wind gusts. This storm resulted in 12 confirmed weather-related fatalities across nine New Jersey counties, the most out of any impacted state.ⁱⁱⁱ It is an egregious misstatement to attempt to qualify this event as routine.

Severe snowstorms – just like hurricanes, flooding and other natural disasters – are a danger to public health and safety. The public relies on the state and federal government to work in tandem to ensure the necessary resources are activated and available, yet once again, this Administration has made a reckless and partisan decision that puts the American people in danger. Flippantly denying the State of New Jersey's legitimate need for assistance and downplaying the severity of this event diminishes the public's faith in our ability to govern.

Denying disaster assistance to American citizens just because they live in states that elected Democratic governors is a betrayal of the oath President Trump swore to uphold. That is why I am formally requesting you to begin an immediate investigation into the politicalization that resulted in President Trump's denial of this disaster funding.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress

ⁱ <https://transportation.house.gov/fema-oversight/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/07/29/fema-democratic-disaster-requests-trump-01013938>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.inquirer.com/politics/nation/fema-trump-new-jersey-democrats-van-drew-20260731.html>