

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 30, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write today to express our strong support for Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin's request for an expedited Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. An expedited Major Disaster Declaration is necessary due to the severity and widespread damages caused by this storm in Southwest Virginia. Preliminary damage assessments are not possible in many areas of Southwest Virginia currently as rescue operations are still in progress, lodging is limited, and infrastructure is damaged in many areas preventing access to certain communities.

Specifically, the Governor has requested an expedited Major Disaster Declaration for the following communities:

Individual Assistance for the Counties of Giles, Grayson, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wythe, and the City of Galax.

Public Assistance for All Categories for the Counties of Bedford, Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, Wythe, and the Cities of Bristol, Covington, Danville, Galax, Norton, and Radford.

In addition, the Governor has requested statewide Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance.

On September 25, 2024, Governor Youngkin declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in anticipation of the impacts of Hurricane Helene. On September 28, 2024, Governor Youngkin requested an Emergency Declaration for Virginia, which was granted on September 29, 2024. We appreciate the prompt approval of the Emergency Declaration as the Commonwealth continues to deal with the impacts of Hurricane Helene.

This catastrophic storm event has produced devastating rainfall throughout Southwest Virginia, which has exceeded 12 inches in several areas. This torrential rainfall has resulted in destructive flooding throughout the region creating dangerous storm surges and a historic flood crest on the New River. The storm caused over 300 road closures, including the washout of bridges and roadways. Currently, there are two confirmed storm-related fatalities. At the peak of the storm, over 200,000 Virginians were without electricity – primarily concentrated in Southwest Virginia.

The loss of power has resulted in a lack of running water and other critical infrastructure, which has created an incredibly dangerous situation in the region for our constituents.


An expedited Major Disaster Declaration would ensure the availability of key federal resources to support the Commonwealth's efforts to guarantee public safety and rapid recovery from the direct and indirect effects of this devastating storm event. Significant federal assistance is needed in Southwest Virginia to help our constituents recover from this historic and destructive storm, which is the most significant disaster in the Commonwealth in over a decade.

We thank you for your consideration of Governor Youngkin's request for an expedited Major Disaster Declaration and request you act expeditiously to approve this designation for Virginia to ensure the Commonwealth has the resources available to support our constituents following this tragic storm event. We look forward to working with you, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and other relevant federal agencies to support the Commonwealth of Virginia's disaster response efforts.

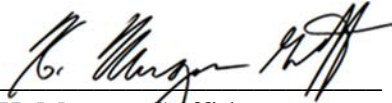
Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress

cc: Deanne Criswell, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency