November 4, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Ms. Mary Lynne Miller
Acting Regional Director
FEMA Region IV

Dear President Bush:

Florida has experienced eight hurricanes, including five major hurricanes of Category 3 or higher, and three tropical storms in the last 15 months. Florida provided unprecedented aid — at a cost of more than $130 million to our state — to our neighbors in Mississippi and Louisiana in their response to Hurricane Katrina.

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended by Public Law 100-707, as implemented by 44 CFR § 206.47, I request that you adjust the cost-share for Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma for the State of Florida. Specifically, I request:

For Hurricane Wilma (DR-1609), I request the current Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 100 percent Federal for the Public Assistance Program, Categories A and B for 60 days from the date of declaration. After the initial 60 days, I request the Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal; and

For Hurricane Wilma (DR-1609), I request the current Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal for the Public Assistance Program, Categories C-G, from the date of the declaration; and
For Tropical Storm Rita (EM-3259), I request the current Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal for the Public Assistance Program, Category A, from the date of the declaration. In addition, I request the Federal/non-Federal cost share for the Public Assistance Program, Category B be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal beyond the initial 72-hour window of eligibility granted at 100%; and

For Hurricane Katrina (DR-1602) I request the current Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal for the Public Assistance Program, Category A and C-G, from the date of the declaration. In addition, I request the Federal/non-Federal cost share for the Public Assistance Program, Category B, be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal beyond the initial 72-hour window of eligibility granted at 100%; and

For Hurricane Dennis (DR-1595), I request the current Federal/non-Federal cost share be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal for the Public Assistance Program, Category A and C-G, from the date of the declaration. In addition, I request the Federal/non-Federal cost share for the Public Assistance Program, Category B, be adjusted to 90 percent Federal, 10 percent non-Federal beyond the initial 72-hour window of eligibility granted at 100%.

Section 206.47(b) recommends that the Federal cost share be adjusted from 75 percent “to not more than 90 percent of the eligible costs of permanent work ... whenever a disaster is so extraordinary that actual Federal obligations ... meet or exceed a qualifying threshold....” The current qualifying threshold is $110 per capita statewide based on the 2000 census. This amount for the State of Florida is $1,913,687,710. Our current joint FEMA/State Preliminary Damage Assessment for Hurricane Wilma is $1,571,241,380. When added to the Preliminary Damage Assessment figures for Hurricanes Dennis ($215,266,524), Katrina ($161,575,366), Katrina-Emergency ($6,500,000), and Rita-Emergency ($6,300,000), it represents an estimated $1,960,883,270 in damages and expenditures that have occurred in the State of Florida in less than a four-month period. This clearly represents an extraordinary hardship for the State, and warrants an adjustment to the current Federal/non-Federal cost share.

Section 206.47(c) also provides that FEMA will consider “the impact of major disaster declarations in the State during the preceding twelve-month period.” The intent of this provision is obviously to reflect on the financial and socioeconomic impacts on a state from recent disasters. Since August, 2004, this State has been declared for six major disasters, and two emergencies. The impact of the 2004 hurricane season is estimated to be a staggering $2.4 billion in eligible damages. The actual obligations for the 2004 events are now predicted to exceed $3.0 billion based on underestimations in the initial damage assessments. When combined with this year’s declarations, we have incurred nearly $5 billion in damages.
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The socioeconomic impacts are equally significant. The repeated disruption of our residents’ lives has made them weary and their recovery difficult. Businesses have been impacted. The significant reduction of our citrus harvest and the initial loss of our winter crops will have a ripple effect throughout our economy. Available and affordable housing for our disaster victims is virtually non-existent. The insurance industry has been stretched to their limits, leaving many residents without a resolution of their damages. This is only a limited reflection of the long-term consequences caused by eight hurricanes in less than 14 months on our State.

I therefore request your favorable consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jeb Bush