

[By Daniel Strauss](#)

A bipartisan group of House legislators representing districts hit by Hurricane Irene called on Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) to approve additional relief funding.

The bipartisan Hurricane Irene Coalition, convened by Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), sent a letter to the two House leaders urging them to provide additional funding for areas ravaged by the August hurricane.

"As members of the Hurricane Irene Coalition, we respectfully request your leadership in ensuring FEMA and the other federal agencies involved in the relief and recovery efforts have the funds necessary to fulfill their mission in response to Hurricane Irene," the letter states.

"While our constituents are working to get back on their feet, they cannot do it alone," the letter continues. "Please provide funding that ensures the swift recovery of the families, farms, business in our districts."

The letter was signed by more than 40 legislators.

At an accompanying press conference on Tuesday, members of the coalition echoed the letter's call.

"I want to make it very clear, the disaster relief fund is perilously low on cash," Rep. Nita Lowey said (D-N.Y.). "And the only way to ensure that FEMA has the resources to assist communities is to replenish this account immediately."

"As a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, I'm calling on Chairman [Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.)] and the leadership of both the House and the Senate to include additional FY '11 funds and all of the more than \$6 billion in funding for the disaster relief fund in FY '12 in the upcoming continuing resolution, so we can avoid needlessly delaying aid to communities," Lowey continued.

The bipartisan group's call came a day after Senate Republicans blocked an attempt by Senate Democrats on Monday to pass a \$7 billion disaster-relief package for the victims of Hurricane Irene, as well as recent tornadoes in the South and Midwest.

Rep. Nan Hayworth (R-N.Y.) said that the aid should not be contingent on the budget.

Welch said the coalition did not have a specific number in mind.

"None of us know what the exact right number is," Welch said. "And I think our position is: Let our governors get the best assessment, let FEMA get the best assessment and then our job is to get that amount of money and not a dollar more than is necessary but not dollar less than is legitimate back to our constituents. That's the bottom line."