

[By Bob Kinzel](#)

Vermont's congressional delegation has gotten involved in the state's dispute with the Federal Emergency Management Agency over rebuilding the state office complex in Waterbury.

Determining how much money FEMA will distribute to towns and states following a natural disaster is not an exact science because the agency uses hundreds of factors and formulas.

Administration Secretary Jeb Spaulding says dealing with FEMA is like negotiating a settlement with an insurance company.

"There are those who say that if FEMA thinks they can get away with less, they will get away with less," Spaulding said.

FEMA funding for the state hospital and the office complex in Waterbury has become an issue in the governor's race.

GOP candidate Randy Brock has charged that the Shumlin administration misled lawmakers about the prospects of getting FEMA money for these projects. Spaulding denies that allegation and says FEMA changed the rules on key reimbursement issues.

Now the state's congressional delegation is getting involved. Senator Bernie Sanders says the delegation had a friendly conversation with the head of FEMA to discuss Waterbury and several other funding issues.

"The state believes, I believe, that FEMA should cover some of these costs," Sanders said. "There may be differences of opinion. So yesterday, the delegation -- Senator Leahy, Congressman Welch and I -- met with the FEMA administrator, Craig Fugate, and we made the

case for the state of Vermont and we will see what happens."

If this effort is not successful, Spaulding says the delegation can always take a tougher approach:

"If we have to make the political case in Washington, we're prepared to do so," he said. "But we're also trying to work as cooperatively and constructively as we can with FEMA."

And GOP candidate Brock says he also supports the congressional effort:

"This is one case in which I hope that one party rule will help us to get through this and convince FEMA to reverse its position and provide us with the money that we need and that we so desperately want," he said.

FEMA is expected to announce its decision on what it feels are appropriate funding levels in about two weeks.