

Vermont's delegation in Congress – Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I) and Representative Peter Welch (D) – Thursday asked President Obama to act "with all due speed" on Vermont's request for a disaster declaration, which would open the doors to a variety of federal programs to help Vermonters cope with recovery efforts in the aftermath of major flooding in the wake of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene.

They sent their letter on the heels of Governor Peter Shumlin's (D) formal request to the President on Thursday, in which he asked for the declaration.

In their letter, the Vermont lawmakers told the President, "Winter is fast approaching and we must move without delay to secure our homes and restore our infrastructure. With just weeks to accomplish so much, we need the full and immediate support of FEMA and other federal agencies.

"Given the breadth and depth of Irene's destruction and the seasonal imperatives of our mountainous state and region, we strongly urge a declaration that is comprehensive and that comes with all due speed."

The text of the letter follows:

Dear Mr. President:

Vermont bore the full brunt of Tropical Storm Irene as it dumped more than six inches of rain across the state in just a few hours. The narrow valleys of the Green Mountains, where towns, roads and rivers are historically intertwined, were particularly hard hit.

You have seen reports of town after town cut off from overland access. Homes, businesses, water systems and miles of roads have been swept away. FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate flew over the area and witnessed firsthand the profound devastation across Vermont.

Our state has withstood an unprecedented wave of flooding this year with two spring events declared as Major Disasters. Vermonters have shouldered these great burdens and are meeting this new crisis with the same courage, cooperation and resilience. Our small state is stretched to the limit and needs both immediate and ongoing assistance in recovering from these enormous setbacks.

Winter is fast approaching and we must move without delay to secure our homes and restore our infrastructure. With just weeks to accomplish so much, we need the full and immediate support of FEMA and other federal agencies.

We ask that you approve Governor Shumlin's request by declaring a Major Disaster, including both Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for each of the counties requested. Given the breadth and depth of Irene's destruction and the seasonal imperatives of our mountainous state and region, we strongly urge a declaration that is comprehensive and that comes with all due speed.

Sincerely,

Senator Patrick Leahy

Senator Bernie Sanders

Congressman Peter Welch