

After a meeting this morning of House Members whose districts were devastated by Hurricane Irene, Chief Deputy Whip Peter Welch (D-Vt.) announced the formation of the bipartisan Hurricane Irene Coalition.

The Coalition will serve two purposes. First, it will work to ensure FEMA has the resources it needs to support the recovery effort. Second, working with FEMA and other federal agencies, it will serve as a resource for Members to support recovery efforts their districts.

Coalition Co-chairs are Reps. Welch (D-Vt.), Gibson (R-N.Y.) DeLauro (D-Conn.), Hayworth (R-N.Y.), Butterfield (D-N.C.), Marino (R-Penn.) Pascrell (D-N.J.), and Jones (R-N.C.).

"Hurricane Irene was an act of God. It will take an act of Congress to ensure that families and businesses slammed by this powerful storm get back on their feet," Welch said. "Natural disasters know no political boundaries; they are indiscriminate in where they strike. America has a long and proud tradition of coming to the aid of fellow Americans who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in harm's way. This bipartisan Coalition will hit the ground running to ensure that our constituents and districts recover from this catastrophe."

Coalition Members met this morning with FEMA Administer Craig Fugate, Deputy Administrator Richard Serino, and White House staff. Administer Fugate briefed the group on the scope of the storm and the ongoing recovery efforts. Welch then lead a discussion about how best to ensure that FEMA has the resources it needs to help their districts recover.

Over thirty offices were represented at today's meeting, including Reps. Welch (D-Vt.), Pelosi (D-Calif.), Hoyer (D-Md.), Larson (D-Conn.), Cantor (R-Va.), Tonko (D-N.Y.), Butterfield (D-N.C.), Pascrell (D-N.J.) Lance (R-N.J.), LoBiando (R-N.J.), McCarthy (D-N.Y.), Runyan (R-N.J.), Jones (R-N.C.), Ackerman (D-N.Y.), DeLauro (D-Conn.), McIntyre (D-N.C.), Olver (D-Mass.), Fitzpatrick (R-Penn.), Smith (R-N.J.), Ruppersberger (D-Md.), Scott (D-Va.), Hayworth (R-N.Y.), Sarbanes (D-Md.), Nadler (D-N.Y.), Langevin (D-R.I.), Marino (R-Penn.), Hanna (R-N.Y.), Grimm (R-N.Y.), Holt (D-N.J.), Meeks (D-N.Y.), Fattah (D-Penn.) and Sens. Brown (R-Mass.) and Warner (D-Va.).