

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) Friday announced that about 90 vacant federally assisted apartments will be available to Vermonters displaced by Tropical Storm Irene, thanks to a federal waiver from the U.S. Treasury Department granted at the request of Governor Peter Shumlin and through the Vermont congressional delegation's advocacy.

In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) identified approximately 90 vacant apartments across the state that had been built using federal tax credit programs. The apartments usually require the residents to meet certain income eligibility requirements, disqualifying some Irene victims. Leahy, Welch and Sanders contacted Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in support of Governor Shumlin's request to temporarily waive the income requirements due to the housing demand created by the storm. Geithner granted the waiver on Friday.

Leahy said, "Hundreds of families across Vermont cannot return to their flood-damaged homes. This waiver is a timely piece of Vermont's plan to find every flood victim a safe place to live and an opportunity to put their lives back together."

Sanders said, "The damage from Tropical Storm is on a scale that is unparalleled in the history of the state. This flexibility from the Treasury Department is a small, but much needed step to help some of the families who lost their homes, and who are facing the prospect of uncertain shelter during the approaching winter."

Welch said, "This is a common sense solution to a pressing problem created by Irene. We have unoccupied apartments and Vermonters who badly need a place to live. I'm thankful to Secretary Geithner for his quick action. Vermonters are starting to get back on their feet after this catastrophic storm. This will help." The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development has been leading the state's efforts to identify housing opportunities for the storm's victims. Secretary Lawrence Miller welcomed news of the waiver: "This waiver is important so that as many Vermonters as possible can keep their families as close to the communities they call home as possible -- keeping their kids in the same school districts and keeping people near their jobs. While every flood victim might not be able to stay close to their community, we will not quit until every Vermonter has suitable, safe and secure housing for the winter, and are working to do so as soon as possible."

Sarah Carpenter, VHFA Executive Director, said, "The state housing agencies have been working closely to identify and make available as many housing resources as possible to the victims of Tropical Storm Irene. We are pleased to give Vermonters impacted by the flooding additional resources to help them recover."

A list of available properties can be found at VHFA's housing website at: [www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org). Flood victims can directly contact the property manager of an available property. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development encourages victims to be sure they are registered with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA. Landlords who have available private rental units are encouraged to call FEMA at 1-866-330-5286. Second homeowners willing to offer their vacant homes to flood victims are encouraged to call 1-866-330-5286.

## Leahy, Sanders, Welch Announce Opening of Apartments to Storm-Displaced Vermonters

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To see Leahy's letter to Secretary Geithner, [click here](#) . To see Welch's, [click here](#) .