

Gov. Peter Shumlin today joined Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) in announcing that Vermont could receive more than \$30 million in additional federal funding for Tropical Storm Irene recovery projects.

Shumlin on May 3 asked President Obama to increase the reimbursement rate for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's public assistance program. Leahy, Sanders and Welch wrote to Obama urging the president to grant the state's request.

"Given the widespread devastation caused by Tropical Storm Irene, we are very pleased that the president acted quickly and approved a higher reimbursement rate," the delegation said in a joint statement.

"This will significantly reduce the financial burden of recovery efforts that would otherwise fall on Vermonters. We have been working closely with Governor Shumlin and his excellent recovery team to do everything we can to make sure Vermont receives the federal resources we need to rebuild our communities as quickly and successfully as possible," Leahy, Sanders and Welch added.

"Vermonters have done an incredible job rebuilding in the eight months since this devastating storm," Shumlin said. "This decision by President Obama is another important piece of the funding puzzle."

The governor thanked the congressional delegation for its support. "I appreciate the delegation's commitment to ensuring Vermont's emergency assistance needs are heard loud and clear – and met – in Washington."

The higher reimbursement rate likely will yield more than \$30 million in additional federal disaster aid for Vermont. The amount includes almost \$26 million in additional FEMA public assistance funds, and approximately \$4 million in additional hazard mitigation funds for property buyouts and to reduce damages from future flooding.

Federal law allows for increased federal participation in disaster funding for “extraordinary” events like Irene.

Typically, FEMA covers 75 percent of the cost of repairing or replacing public infrastructure and facilities, such as state buildings and municipal roads, bridges and buildings. The president has authority to increase the federal share to 90 percent in extraordinary circumstances.

Vermont Secretary of Administration Jeb Spaulding noted that the additional aid would help ease the burden on state resources that have been budgeted to cover uninsured damages to state-owned facilities, like the Waterbury State Office Complex and the temporary relocation of the Vermont State Hospital.

Vermont League of Cities and Towns Executive Director Steven Jeffrey noted the importance of the president’s decision for Vermont towns. “Some towns have spent several times their annual operating budgets repairing damages to local roads and bridges, town halls, libraries, schools, fire departments and water plants,” Jeffrey said. “I cannot overstate how important it is to these towns to have the local share reduced so significantly.”

To read the letter from Shumlin to President Obama, click [here](#) .

To read the letter from Leahy, Sanders and Welch to President Obama, click [here](#) .