

JUN 06 2011



FEMA

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thompson:

Thank you for your letter dated May 12, 2011, on the behalf of those individuals whose non fraudulent-disaster assistance awards are undergoing recoupment, and who reside in communities affected by the recent spring tornadoes and ongoing flooding. I appreciate your patience in awaiting this response.

Upon commencement of the recoupment process for debts from overpayments provided to disaster applicants, individuals received a Notice of Debt letter, which explained that they were found ineligible for some or all of the funds provided under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288 as amended), 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207. This Notice of Debt letter explained that, if the individual disagreed with FEMA's decision, he/she had the right to appeal that decision within 60 days from the date of the letter.

Your correspondence suggests that, due to the recent disasters, FEMA consider an extension to the appeal deadline. FEMA recognizes that the primary concern for individuals and families once again affected by disaster is to ensure the safety of family and property. Therefore, FEMA has extended the 60-day appeal period of the Notice of Debt to 120 days for those who reside in an area recently impacted by a major disaster. This will allow for an additional 60 days from the date of the Notice of Debt letter to appeal FEMA's decision.

Your letter also suggests that FEMA consider postponing disbursement of Notice of Debt letters for the individuals who reside in designated areas currently under a disaster declaration. FEMA has not yet commenced the disbursement of Notice of Debt letters to those who received overpayments from assistance provided during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. When FEMA is ready to disburse these Notices, they will be sent in batches based on a predetermined phased approach. This phased approach will require the volume of Notices be relatively limited at first. Once we are ready to begin, we will consider current disaster activity when targeting where the first batches of Notices will be sent to avoid geographic areas impacted by recently declared disasters.

I appreciate the concerns outlined in your correspondence, and I hope this letter aids in clarifying FEMA's commitment to ensure that the recoupment procedures continue to be fair, transparent, and permit consideration of the on-going hardship in the Gulf Region.

Representative Thompson

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Should you have further questions or concerns, please have a member of your staff contact FEMA's Legislative Affairs Division at (202) 646-4500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Craig Fugate'. The signature is stylized with a large 'W' and 'C'.

W. Craig Fugate
Administrator