

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

November 22, 2024

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
United States Department of Homeland Security
500 C St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is conducting oversight of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA or Agency) actions relating to disaster relief and recovery efforts following Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Recent whistleblower accounts allege that FEMA supervisors are deviating from the Agency's mission and limiting relief based on the political affiliations of disaster survivors. In light of these allegations, the Committee is seeking documents and information to ensure transparency and guarantee that disaster relief for Americans is not dictated based on political affiliation.

You recently testified before the Committee that there is no evidence that the reported "best practice" of "avoid[ing] homes advertising Trump"¹ extends beyond Ms. Marn'i Washington's supervisory role in Florida. However, recent media reports and additional whistleblower allegations suggest that political discrimination against conservative disaster survivors may be more widespread than you led the Committee to believe.

For example, on the condition of anonymity, a FEMA official stated that the practice of avoiding "white or conservative-dominated" areas is an "open secret at the agency that has been going on for years."² Additionally, another whistleblower contacted the Committee during the hearing. This individual informed the Committee that a FEMA contractor warned a disabled veteran's family in Georgia to remove Trump campaign materials from their home because FEMA supervisors viewed Trump supporters as domestic terrorists.³ Also during the hearing, Rep. Greg Steube stated he had heard from 35 constituents "with specific instances in which they

¹ See Leif Le Mahieu, *EXCLUSIVE: FEMA Official Ordered Relief Workers To Skip Houses With Trump Signs*, DAILY WIRE (Nov. 8, 2024).

² Jennie Tarr, et al., *FEMA worker accused of telling staff to skip hurricane-ravaged Trump homes claims it was common practice: 'This is not isolated'*, NY POST (Nov. 12, 2024).

³ Mariane Angela, *New Whistleblower Claims His FEMA Supervisors Considered Trump Supporters 'Domestic Terrorists'*, DAILY CALLER (Nov. 19, 2024) (quoting Chairman James Comer that, "The elderly homeowners were so frightened by this and afraid that they would not recover their loss that they removed the signs. Nevertheless, FEMA has not returned to their residence. This took place not in Florida, but Georgia.").

were either overlooked or specifically discriminated against because of their political affiliation.”⁴

The Committee is in the process of investigating these claims. If they are true, they would corroborate concerns that political discrimination extends beyond Ms. Washington. Furthermore, they suggest an apparent culture, whether sanctioned or not, within FEMA to politically discriminate against disaster survivors, specifically those who support President-elect Donald Trump. The Committee finds these practices unacceptable and reprehensible.

During the Committee’s hearing, you testified that FEMA is “prepared to support requests for information” from Congress.⁵ Therefore, to assist the Committee’s crucial oversight into discrimination by FEMA employees and the potential political weaponization of the Agency, please provide the following documents and information relating to FEMA disaster relief and recovery efforts following Hurricanes Helene and Milton no later than December 6, 2024:

1. All Disaster Survivor Assistance surveys and incident reports with notes referring to survivors’ political affiliation, including but not limited to references of Trump or campaign materials;
2. FEMA’s general supervisory structure, as well as the specific supervisory structure for Region 4, including the names and titles of personnel who were above Ms. Marn’i Washington in the chain of command;
3. All communications between FEMA’s upper management, including Region 4 administrators and supervisors, and Region 4 field staff and representatives referencing any political party or candidate for federal office;
4. Any official memoranda, instructions, policies, or guidelines related to avoidance, de-escalation, disengagement, and hostility;
5. FEMA’s funding structure and budget allocations to its Disaster Relief Fund;
6. Any internal reports from FEMA employees, contractors, or volunteers, and any FEMA investigations relating to political discrimination;
7. Any reports or complaints from survivors in FEMA Region 4 about their homes not contacted by FEMA personnel, or more broadly, about apparent political discrimination since Hurricanes Helene and Milton;
8. The names and positions of the thirteen members in the Microsoft Teams group chat entitled “Crew 33 (THE GREATEST)”;

⁴ *Oversight of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Hearing Before H. Comm. on Oversight & Accountability* (Nov. 19, 2024) (testimony of Hon. Criswell).

⁵ *Id.*, (Statement of Rep. Steube).

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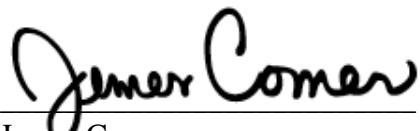
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9. All documents and communications in the “Crew 33 (The GREATEST)” group chat, including all accompanying, uploaded, or imbedded attachments and documents; and
10. The Committee has learned that Ms. Washington and her team were visited by three FEMA personnel on or around October 30, after the whistleblower complaint was filed. Please provide the names of these individuals.

The Committee requests that FEMA provide Committee staff a weekly update on the status of the Office of Professional Responsibility’s (OPR) investigation into these matters and that OPR provide the Committee with its findings and a briefing at the conclusion of its investigation. In addition, the Committee requests a briefing with Ms. Washington’s Task Force Lead Chad Hershey, as well as the highest-ranking FEMA official with specific responsibility over disaster relief efforts in response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton in Georgia. To schedule the briefings or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority staff at 202-225-5074. Attached are instructions for producing the documents and information to the Committee.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate, “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Glenn Grothman
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
the Border, and Foreign Affairs



Pete Sessions
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and the Federal Workforce



Nancy Mace
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,
Information Technology, and
Government Innovation

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Pat Fallon

Chairman

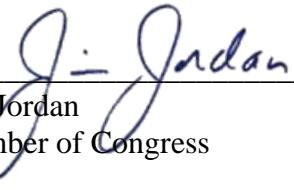
Subcommittee on Economic Growth,
Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs



Lisa McClain

Chairwoman

Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services



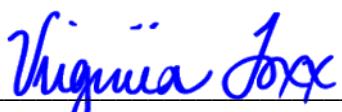
Jim Jordan

Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.

Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx

Member of Congress



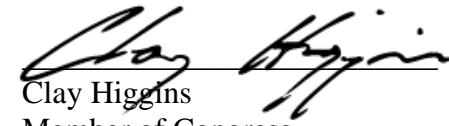
Michael Cloud

Member of Congress



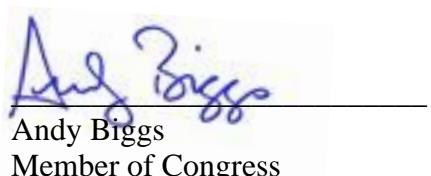
Gary Palmer

Member of Congress



Clay Higgins

Member of Congress



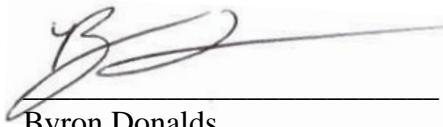
Andy Biggs

Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner

Member of Congress



Byron Donalds

Member of Congress



Scott Perry

Member of Congress

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William Timmons, IV
Member of Congress



Tim Burchett
Member of Congress



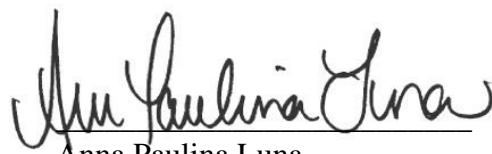
Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress



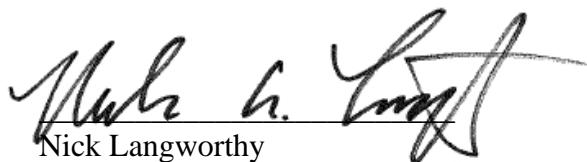
Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress



Russell Fry
Member of Congress



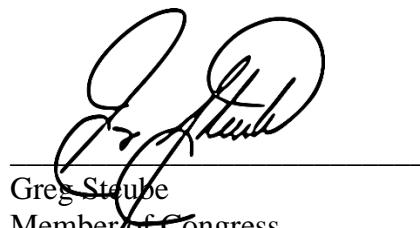
Anna Paulina Luna
Member of Congress



Nick Langworthy
Member of Congress



Eric Burlison
Member of Congress



Greg Steube
Member of Congress



Rich McCormick, MD
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce

The Honorable Gerald Connolly, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation

The Honorable Cori Bush, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs

The Honorable Katie Porter, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services