



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

February 11, 2013

Dear Representative:

As the House of Representatives prepares to consider H.R. 592, the Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act, we write in support of the legislation, which would ensure the fair and equal treatment for houses of worship damaged in a natural disaster.

The legislation is consistent with Supreme Court jurisprudence, which recognizes the right of religious institutions to receive public financial aid in the context of a broad program administered on the basis of religion-neutral criteria. The bill is not asking for special treatment, just equal treatment that conforms to constitutional protections.

It should be noted that in the aftermath of a natural disaster houses of worship often play an irreplaceable role in the recovery of a community. Discrimination that treats houses of worship as ineligible for federal assistance in the wake of a natural disaster, beyond being a legal violation, hurts the very communities most affected by the indiscriminate force of nature.

The best approach to address questions of eligibility for houses of worship is a permanent clarification of federal law. For this reason we support H.R. 592 and ask that it be adopted by Congress.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for
Religious Liberty

Most Reverend Denis J. Madden
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore
Chairman, USCCB Committee for
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